

GRIT

STORY SECTION

October 8, 1933

BEGINNING TODAY

FLAME OF THE BORDER

By Vingie E. Roe

A Love Serial in a
Western Setting. The
Story of a Girl Who
Dared to Love an Out-
law and Attempt His
Reformation. . . .



Flame of the Border

Vingie E. Roe

Here is a novel that is both a Western Story and a Love Story, one certain to please even the most critical GRIT fiction reader.

CHAPTER I

THE girl, clinging to the face of the weathered cliff, her booted feet barely touching the narrow ledge below, was chiefly conscious of the strain upon her wrists. All the pain in the world seemed centered there. She knew that 300 feet of space hung blue and clear beneath her, and still she endured with her dark eyes flaming upward at the face which topped the mesa's rim.

This was a man's face, young and lean and weathered as the land about, a face wild as a hawk's, with long blue eyes that watched her painfully.

Moreover, it was a drunken face—or it had been ten minutes ago. Now it was sobering fast, and there was sweat at its temples.

"Let go with one hand—please—an' catch th' rope," its owner begged, "for th' love of God!"

"Leave God out of it!" the girl panted thinly. "A lot you know about Him!"

"Then for your folks, miss. Haven't you got some folks somewhere who'd break their hearts if you—if you—fell?"

"Sure I have—a brither who'd kill you if he knew."

"I'd give him th' chance. Only catch th' rope. It's a little pull. I'll have you up here in a minute."

"For what?" she asked bitterly.

The man groaned.

"For your life—an' your safety."

"You give me your word?"

"Yes. Will you take it?"

"I will. Swing that loop to my other shoulder. I'm left-handed."

With the expert precision of a trained cow hand the man swung the loop around her slim body, a rolling motion smooth as wind across a stone. With a cat-like sweep of her left hand the girl caught it, let go the bare root of the dead pinyon pine stump on the rim which had saved her, and swung clear.

Hand over hand the man raised her the scant ten feet which had separated them and pulled her over the edge of the cliff. Together they rose to their feet and stood looking into each other's eyes with a tragic tenseness which precluded speech.

What, they saw was two pale young faces on which the hand of life had suddenly set its mark.

Then the man stooped and pecked up the girl's wide Stetson hat and held it out to her. She took it without a word, set it on her dark head, brushed the white, sandy silt of the cliff-face from her shirt and riding breeches, and watched him catch her horse and lead it back.

She took her rein and swung up in her saddle, her lips set in a tight line above her firm chin. In that tense silence she leaned to the start when he caught her horse's bit.

"I—miss," he said thickly, "I want to—to say that I ain't ever felt so bad in my life. I've done a lot of things that wouldn't bear light, but nothin' so bad as this. I never made so big a mistake in judgment in all my days, an' there ain't no excuse I can offer. I just—just didn't know a woman lived who'd rather die than—than—"

"No!" said the girl like a rasp. "You've got a lot to learn, then. Now, get out of my way."

She lifted the rein again, leaned in her saddle, and the horse beneath her leaped to his stride from a standing start.



Across the high mesa she went like a streak of flame, her scarlet shirt against the blue sky making a fire in the spirit of the man who stood watching her. Past the ancient ruins of the dead pueblo she went, and disappeared over the mesa's rim in the narrow trail that led down to the desert plain below.

When he could no longer hear the sound of her horse's feet sliding in the loose stone silt he stooped and picked up his own hat. For a long time he held it in his two hands, staring at it unseeing.

Down on the sandy levels the girl gave her horse his head and sailed away toward the north and east. Two hours later she rode into the stone-flagged patio of her brother's ranch house and swung off with the last thunder of the iron-shod feet.

"That was a pretty piece of horsemanship, Sonya," said a man's voice from the hammock that swung between two cottonwoods beyond the rock-walled spring where the desert flowers grew; "quite spectacular. How long have you ridden like that?"

"Oh, hello, Rod! Why, I don't know. Ever since I've been in this country, I guess—five years now. It's a land that makes for fight and wide gestures. You just feel live and light here, like the sun and the sunlight. Besides, I love to leave Darkness in motion. It's something like the highest arc in a swing, you know, a challenge to sail out beyond."

"I see. You've been gone an unreasonably time. Where've you been?"

"Over beyond Chee Wash. There's a sick woman there in a hogan, and I'm afraid she's going to die."

A shadow passed across the girl's face, darkening it for a moment.

She sighed, pulling off her hat and throwing herself into a long chair made of peeled saplings and dried to desert lightness by the sun and wind.

"These Indians are so pitiful, Rod, so patient, so hopeless. And they are so poor. They make me fairly question destiny sometimes."

"My darling! Why bother your dear head? What's one Navajo more or less?"



The Girl, Clinging to the Weathered Cliff,
Turned Her Flaming Eyes Upward
at the Face Which Topped
the Mesa's Rim

"I wish you wouldn't talk like that, Rod," she said earnestly. "If you knew them like I do you couldn't. Knew their quiet resignation, their loyalty, the beauty of their native legends. They are a lost people, that I grant you, who know they are lost, and they are going down to oblivion like a gallant ship with its sails set and flags flying. You don't understand, Rod."

"No," said the man, getting up and coming toward her, "I don't. Neither do I want to. I only understand that your absurd devotion to them is keeping you from me and from your rightful place in life."

He stooped and kissed her gently.

"Go wash and rest a bit, child," he said; "you look rather fagged. Lila is in the nursery with Baba, and Serge is out on the range somewhere. Said he wouldn't be in till night."

"All right," said Sonya. "I guess I'll take your advice. I am a little tired."

She rose and entered the deep house, a cool place, its walls laid up of flat stones chinked with adobe mud, its bare floors bright with Indian rugs. The rooms were many, low, and wide. The silence of the desert hung in it. Plants in colored pots grew in the deep abstruses of its windows.

Sonya Savarin loved her brother's house, his wife, his child, and himself best of all. For five years she had lived with them in this lone land of cactus, sand, and sunlight, and it seemed as if a hand tugged at her heart whenever she thought of leaving them.

She had thought of that gravely the last year. Of New York and Rodney Blake and all they stood for—convention and affluence and what the world called life. It had been a year, on the nineteenth of next month, since she had promised to marry him. Rod was the soul of gallantry and had made three trips to Arizona in that time, always urging her to come away with him, to give up her work, and always she had put him off a little longer.

Not that she wasn't fond of him. Who could fail to be fond of him with his good looks, his smiling good nature? And he was Serge's closest friend. Dated from college days. But how could she give up her work here among the people whom she had learned to love and who needed her and her skill so badly? Weighing herself, Rod said. If she must practice medicine, why not do it where the results were valuable, among folk who counted, where she could make a career for herself in her chosen field?

These thoughts passed through her mind as she divested herself of her dusty riding clothes and bathed in the low pool in one corner of her room where the living waters of the spring ran softly through and out under the wall in a pipe. A treasure, this indoor pool.

Little hardy flowers grew at the pipe's spillway outside.

Blessings in this dry, still country. Blessings it would be hard to leave. Along with Darkness and Lila and little Baba.

Yet she had come near as a breath to leaving them three hours back and had not given them a thought. There had been no thought in her when she had flung her body out of the arms of the man who held her and over the edge of Lone Mesa—only the age-old terror of conquest, the high, fierce flare of white-hot fury at delirium which has filled the heart of woman since creation.

She had essayed death as instinctively as she drew her breath, and had done it on the instant. A Mid-Victorian throw-back in her, some would say, no doubt, but thinking back she knew it for a deeper thing than any training. It was she herself, her soul, her immutable standard of innate fitness.

The man, the tall, lean vandal of saddle and spur, who had ridden her down to the mesa's edge and lifted her bodily from Darkness' back, came back in her vision, as he had come again and again on the ride home, in the patio with Rod.

She could see the lion blue eyes of him, wild with inner fire under their sleepy look. They had large pupils under their bronze-colored lashes, and they were fierce and cruel, swift eyes that could change in a second from one vital expression to another.

She had seen them change, instantly, when she looked up after the sliding fall over the rim, the jolting catch of her clutching hands in the pinyon roots. From that promising, sleepy wildness to wide shock. Had seen them literally sober themselves from half-drunken dementia to anguished sanity. Strange

eyes. Beautiful, even in their beast-like cruelty. There had been no mercy for her in them. A wave of the cold terror of that moment went over her, followed instantly by a burning flush of anger. She struck the comb she held so hard against the dresser's edge that it shattered in a dozen pieces.

"I'll take my pound of flesh from him for this," she told herself, through tight lips, "if it takes me the rest of my natural life. If a free citizen of this country can't ride in safety I'll know the reason why."

Then she finished dressing and went out to where Lila, dark Serge's long-haired, golden wife, put the finishing touches on the table for the evening meal. They were a striking foil for each other, Sonya and her sister-in-law, one so tall and dark and vital, full-lipped, full of brow above her dusky eyes, sinuous in her movements; the other small and fragile as a flower, a fair thing to look at, to know. There were depths in little Lila that only those who knew her well suspected.

Sonya knew her very well. They were close as a hand in its glove, these two.

A tight conspiracy against the crown, Serge sometimes told them smilingly, meaning himself. But it was a conspiracy of love and loyalty and that dear service which only love engenders, and he knew it. It had served him well, for things had not been too easy on the ranch in the sagebrush country where

Serge Savarin ran his flocks of sheep, and women can hold up the hands of men when the waters of circum-



"I'll Take My Pound of Flesh From Him for This," She Told Herself Through Tight Lips

stance become too deep. These two had waded with him, leaning in against his shoulders. Frail Lila had carried his child, too, and Sonya had stood by at its deliverance. That had been three years back, and he knew in his heart that if it hadn't been for their strong courage he'd have given up and gone, leaving the stone house and the living spring, the sheep and the lizards, the great sweeps of the immutable desert, the winds and the unspeakable beauty of the sunrise, to wait in majestic solitude until the crack of doom.

But he had been ashamed to quit, and he loved it all as passionately as the two women loved it. And times were better now. The flocks had become herds. He had Indians with them in camps all over the sage.

"Hello, Sonya," said Lila. "How's Two Fingers' wife?"

"Bad," said Sonya. "She has an intestinal infection, and I'm afraid I'm going to lose her. She's a sweet thing, too, pretty and young. Two babies. The patience of these Indians is pathetic. She whispered to me that if she had to go away, why sorrow? It was the common lot."

"Poor creature," said Lila, her eyes filling. "What more can you do, dear?"

"Only a very little more. I'm going back early tomorrow and stay with her till the crisis passes."

"Rod won't like that. He was bored today without you."

"I know. But a woman's life is more

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than any man's impatience, Lila. I can't consider it."

"Good girl. You take chances."

"Of course. What's a thing worth that can't bear and forebear?"

"Rod's worth a lot in many ways, Sonya. A fine man at bottom."

"Yes. Else I shouldn't have become so fond of him. But he's a bit cold toward the under dog. I've known that for a long time."

"So have I. But he surely loves you devotedly. His patience with your procrastination proves that."

"Surely does. Dear Rod," said Sonya smiling, "I'll have to stay with him more as soon as Little Moon is better—or gone."

"If she dies," said Lila, "what will become of the babies?"

"Two fingers has a sister over in Long Ruins. Maybe she'd take them. I'd hate to see them go into the school. They're so little and so wild-like baby quail. They need a woman's love, not a routine."

Lila sighed and looked at Babs through the open door.

"This world is hard on children—and women," she said, "and only a man's true love redeems it."

"And here comes one of the crusaders now," said Sonya nodding her black head toward the northern sage. "Serge."

A pink flush spread quickly up under Lila's fair skin. Her blue eyes crinkled at the corners. Always the sound of her husband's coming brought this phenomenon of joy to sight upon her face.

She left her task and went to the door of the big dining room to watch him approach. As he rode into the great corral beside the stone barn she waved a hand in greeting. Then she came back and hurried at her work, to be ready as soon as he should get washed up.

A little later he came in from the back patio, scrubbed and shining, his riding clothes brushed free of the day's sand and dust, his dark face burned by sun and wind.

A handsome man was Serge Savarin, taller than Sonya, showing his Russian blood in the bold contours of his face, the fire in his black eyes, the slowness of his movements.

He kissed Lila with a long kiss, smiled at Sonya.

"Whew!" he said. "Sure is good to get home."

Rodney Blake came in, his hands in the pockets of his plus-fours.

"This is the darnedest family," he complained, grinning. "Here am I, a guest under its roof, and I've twiddled my thumbs all day waiting for it to see I'm around."

"Now, Rod!" said Lila. "Is that nice? Haven't Babs and I paid you all the attention possible?"

"Babel! The young autocat! She's slept most of the time and ignored me the rest. You've done pretty well, Lila, considering the thousand things you've done today about the house, but as for these others, well, I know I should be highly affronted by their indifference. Some day I'm going to be, no kidding."

"Yeah you will," said Serge. "Come here, Babs, and sit on Daddy's lap for supper."

It was a pleasant meal that followed, with the cool wind of early evening

blowing up from the long south levels, and later the small group sat in the big patio watching the twilight march across the mysterious land in unspeakable beauty.

Sonya, resting her head against the long chair's back, sighed in sheer ecstasy of appreciation.

"Tired, dear?" asked Rod tenderly.

Sonya moved and looked at him.

"Tired? Why, no, I'm not tired now," she said.

"Then why the sigh?"

"Oh, I don't know. Just—just drinking in—all this, I guess."

She waved her hands apart, and the gesture compassed the whole lone country with simple eloquence.

The man, smoking, watched her with speculative eyes in which there was a glint of hardness. This country and its problems—they menaced his hope, and he was beginning to hate them with a deep and abiding hatred.

Serge was talking about the bands of his sheep on Bad Land Levels, and Lila was asking this and that question at intervals, and presently Sonya, watching the great stars come out upon the blue heavens, lost the purport of their words. She was thinking of the woman in the lowly hogan beyond Chee Wash, and of the dark-faced man who loved her in his silent fashion, and her heart was sad and heavy with her fear for them.

And then, superimposed upon their pathetic tragedy, she saw again the sky beyond Lone Mesa's rim and the wild fair face of a man sobering in bewilderment and anguish. She stirred in her chair, and Rod Blake touched her hand.

"Eh?" she said, startled.

CHAPTER II

BY EARLY dawn Sonya was up and dressed, her saddlebags replenished with such remedies as she might need for her battle with Old Man Death in the hogan beyond Chee Wash. Darkness, full fed and watered, waited patiently in the patio. She stood in the dim kitchen with a cup of coffee in one hand, a hastily made sandwich in the other, and talked lowly to Lila.

"It's going to be a hard day, old dear," she said, "and I may not get back tonight. If I don't, don't worry. I'll be with Two Fingers and the babies and poor Little Moon. If she seems to be going, I'll not leave her."

"No," said Lila, "no, of course not. Oh, Sonya, you're such a strong force! Like a rock with the light on it when the levels are dark."

Sonya sighed.

"There are uncounted miles of levels," she said. "I only wish I were a thousand rocks."

"I know. What shall I tell Rod when he gets up?"

"He knows I'm going—I told him last night—but not that I might stay over. Tell him again how it is with Little Moon—and mention the babies."

"They're just dirty little Navajos to him."

"They're tragic babies just the same," said Sonya sharply, "and he will have to see it. Well, so long. I'm off."

She set down her empty cup, pulled on her gloves, and went softly out.

She hugged Darkness' nose, which nudged her breast after a little rite that was common between them, and went up his tall side and into her old saddle with the easy grace of a working cow hand. She was fit in every lean muscle of her body, flawlessly pliant.

The big horse, hard as iron and perfect in training, leaned to the almost imperceptible motion of hand and rein on his neck, and trotted out of the patio. Once on the sandy stretch of level country he rolled away in a long and tireless lope, a harbinger of hope, a bringer of comfort to the lowly.

The sun was not yet up, though its rose and gold of promise flared in the eastern sky, and the cold desert wind of dawn was blowing from the southwest. Sonya loved this wind, and the blue shadows that clothed the sage like smoke, and the ghostly buttes and pinnacles that stood stark in the dark country, their tops beginning to glow with the new light. A thrill always went deep into her soul when she rode like this before the early day, her heart swelled with nameless things—thanksgiving for life, principally, and a longing to absorb the mysterious beauty of the ancient world, the ageless miracle of the desert under dawn.

Far to the south and west she could see Lone Mesa.

It dominated the landscape, majestic, stern, silent, holding up its dead pueblo to the skies, as a mother holds her lifeless child, begging of the infinite for an answer to the tragic riddle of life and death.

She loved the great tableland. Times without number she had climbed its steep trail on Darkness, to ride its three-by-five-mile top, to sit in the sun beside its ancient pueblo walls with their rotting ladders, to stand on its sharp-cut rim and scan the lone world below.

Until yesterday nothing had ever disturbed her, nothing disputed her right of way. Once she had seen a coyote skulking among the ruins, and vultures sailed close along its edge, while an occasional rattler whirled its warning from beside a stone, but nothing human had ever been there beside herself—until yesterday.

At the thought her face flushed red with anger at the man who had ridden her down to the mesa's edge and pulled her from her saddle, his handsome face aflame with rapine. She felt the blood burn along her cheeks. It was resentment she felt, the fierce rage of indignation that any one or anything should interfere with her freedom and her right to it. Her dark eyes were hot with it, her soft mouth set in a prim line.

But the look she gave the men as she rode along beneath it was neither fearful nor resigned. It was a look of promise, rather, as if some stubborn thing within her would take her to its lonely heights more often than usual now.

Darkness, rolling steadily away across the shadowed sage, left the great mesa behind and entered a more broken region. Here the pinyons were thick and stunted; greasewood spread its gray skirts.

Rocks increased in size and numbers, and everywhere deep gullies and tiny

canyons bisected or radiated from each other.

The sun came up as they entered the broad mouth of Chee Wash with its red sandstone walls, and a little later they came in sight of the hogan of Two Fingers. A round, low habitation of a single room, laid up of flat stones one above another, like flakes of prehistoric dust, it faced the east, as all hogans must.

Its door was hung with a bright blanket worth many dollars in the right market and made by Little Moon's industrious hands. From its central rise a thin thread of smoke ascended. Something caught at Sonya's heart—it was so stark and poor a home, its people so helpless.

Two Fingers met her beside the water hole, a muddy depression in the rocks and sand, staked around with bleached gray juniper poles to keep the wild horses of the region from trampling it to nothing. He was a man of around 30, weathered like dark leather, his patient face as native to the land as Lone Mesa itself, and there was about him a simple dignity, as there was about the poorest of these Indians.

He wore a blue flannel shirt, corduroy pants held by a silver-studded belt, and his hair was long and bound in two neat doubled flares on the back of his head. Though he spoke fair English and had a sizable band of sheep, this manner of wearing his hair stamped him as a "wild buck," one of those who had not yet become entirely civilized. For one thing, Two Fingers did not drink, and for another, he still worshipped his ancient gods. Sonya liked him.

Now she said, "Hello, Two Fingers. How is the this morning?"

"Bad," he said briefly and reached for Darkness' rein.

Sonya swung down and took off her saddlebags.

As she stooped under the lifted blanket to enter the hogan her lips set themselves in a sharp, unconscious line. Bad was right, she thought. There was the smell of death here. She would need to gird her loins today in all truth.

At first the dusky shadows hid the interior from her sight, even though a candle burned steadily in a little pottery cup beside the northern wall. Then, as her eyes adjusted themselves, she set down her bags and knelt beside the first heap of skins and blankets which lay on the sandy floor, its head to the outer wall, its foot toward the center of the hogan where a little fire sent up its tiny column of smoke toward the hole in the center peak of the low roof.

There were three of these flat beds. In the farther one the two children still slept heavily. In this one Little Moon lay, panting with fever, her big black eyes beautiful in the dim light.

"Courage, keep up courage, little mother," Sonya said in Navajo, "I am with you."

The Indian woman smiled, touched her hand with timid fingers.

She took the draught which the other gave her presently, and watched her as she set about cooking some oatmeal over the coals of the tiny fire.

Thus it was which had made Sonya the idol of these poor and silent people, this service of heart and hand which had

saved them, literally, from death in many cases.

She fought for what sanitation she could produce among them, taught them the importance of proper feeding in fevers, the superiority of mustard plasters over sing-songs in pneumonia, and labored generally like a mother with her children.

Now she bathed the hot brown body under the blankets, gave Little Moon the thinned cereal as a drink, waked and washed the children, fed them the rest of the oatmeal, ate two pieces of fried mutton and some crackers with Two Fingers, and stood for a while outside the hogan in the morning sunlight, filling her lungs with the sweet air which was already warming from the night's cold.

She felt wonderful herself, strong and high within, as if she set her body against a wall and could not be backed down. This was the gauge of battle in her, that she knew, the deep determi-

deep look. Perhaps nothing more was needed.

Then Two Fingers went away, and the women were alone in the hogan.

"We meet the enemy," said Sonya, still in Navajo—there was a comfort in it, a strength, it seemed—"but we meet him together. I hold your hand. Hold tight to mine. We must both fight, very hard. The medicine will fight too. It is a good fighter. But not for a moment must we fail or sink or stop fighting. You understand?"

The other nodded.

"It is good," said Sonya.

And the day of battle began.

Somewhere out in the sand and rocks of Chee Wash Two Fingers would be praying to his ancient gods, sitting quietly, perhaps, watching the babies playing with sticks, building corrals for their pebble horses. He had some mutton jerky in the pouch at his belt. He'd feed them with it later.



Two Fingers Met Her Beside the Water Hole, a Muddy Depression in the Rocks and Sand

nation to win in what she set herself to do, the passionate sympathy and pity which were like a steel blade in her.

If it were possible to save the patient brown woman in there with what weapons she had at her command, with unrelenting vigilance, with instant combat of every adverse change, then she would do it or know the reason for her failure.

She looked up at the high blue sky with its sailing, full white clouds, her mind an attitude of prayer, and turning lifted the blanket and went in.

Two Fingers gathered the babies and made ready to depart, according to her request made a moment back. She wanted the day alone, clear visioned for the crisis, nothing within sight to distract her. The man looked down at the woman on the low bed, holding one child, leading the other, and the woman looked up.

They said nothing. It might be their last look on earth, their eternal parting, for all they knew, yet there was no outcry, no sign of sorrow, nothing but that

It was the way of life in the solitudes, the way of death, all chance, all waiting.

The ageless sun marched up the deep blue heavens. The wind of the early day died down. Heat and silence and that mysterious hush which broods upon all desert countries lay thick upon the land.

Sonya in the hogan worked tirelessly. The cold of the night had given place to the heat of day, and sweat dripped from her temples. Her shirt was open at the neck, her sleeves rolled up.

Regularly, by the watch in its black strap on her left wrist, she fed the woman the thin warm gruel. Regularly, monotonously she bathed her from head to foot in the water she carried from the water hole, climbing laboriously up from its rocky edge. Regularly she slipped her thermometer into the parched mouth, reading it anxiously. As steadily she gave her medicines.

At noon she saw no sign of hope, but

Continued on Page 13

ROB'S LUCK

*A Story of Fair Time
and Its Lure*

BY MARY GRAHAM BONNER



DESPITE the fact that Roberta Drummond had succeeded during her two years in New York in rising from third stenographer in one department to private secretary to her employer, and had also become engaged to the richest of men, she was dissatisfied.

She had met Leonard Connover only six months ago when she had come in contact with him in connection with some legal work he was doing for her employer.

Leonard, she had known from the first, was socially above her. Leonard knew it, too. But she was not the kind who would ever disgrace a man; Leonard, she had often been happy to notice, realized that upon more than one occasion. Not only that—he had told her so, told her that she could hold her own anywhere. She must still go a bit slowly, he intimated, but it would be sure to be all right. And he loved her so much, he had told her, that he wanted her as his wife even if he had been more fortunate than she in the matter of birth.

Well, Aunt Lily had brought her up well. And she had improved materially. Then what was wrong with her? Perhaps it was because she was tired. Yes, that was it. How tired a person could get in New York—not so tired as to make one want to sleep refreshingly, but too tired to sleep at all, so tired that it seemed an effort to close the eyes, to settle back and relax.

A bell rang at the apartment door, and Leonard appeared.

"I'm so glad you're here, Leonard," she told him. "I've been having the blues. And the wretched part of it all is that I don't know why except that I must be more tired than I realize." He sat down by her and put his hands over hers. "Poor little girl," he said gently. "It has been hard for you, coming to the city and having to make every step of the way yourself. You're worn out, naturally. It isn't as though you had had any sort of a real start. And these first hot days of the summer always tell on a person."

She looked at him, her deep blue eyes troubled.

"Leonard?" she exclaimed. "I've an idea! Aunt Lily does so want me to come up and spend my vacation there this summer, and I think it would be good for me. I haven't been back since I left, and it hasn't really been fair to Aunt Lily."

"She did everything for me, you know, brought me up. I couldn't have loved my mother any more if she had lived than Aunt Lily. And for the last two years I have been going on camping expeditions and trips, when I guess perhaps the trouble with me is that I am homesick for the country—my own country, I mean—not this camping with a dozen other girls in ugly camping territory."

"And you could come up, too, Leonard, couldn't you? There's an excellent hotel in the village only a mile and a half from us—and we could walk—and, oh, it would be such a rest! You can't help but like Aunt Lily."

Leonard was not, he told himself, particularly taken with the idea. But in a moment it had seemed to change Roberta. Already she looked more rested, less tense.

"And when are you planning to give up your work entirely?" he asked.

"About a month—maybe two before we're married," she answered in a strange, low voice. She was nervous about that, he decided. Girls were, he had been told. It was a happy time of their lives perhaps, but a tense one, too. He also had felt it, uneasy nervous doubts coming to him from time to time which were all, he knew, a part of that curious tension.

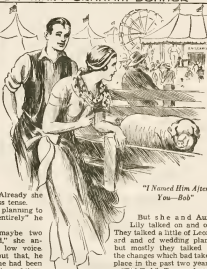
They had planned to be married at Thanksgiving. They would, they agreed now, be married earlier, and Roberta would spend her two months before her marriage resting in the country. They left for her up-state home the last week in August.

They went up together and that first evening Leonard met Aunt Lily and had supper at the small farm, which he admitted to himself was far more attractive than he had fancied it would be. Aunt Lily in New York would be out of the setting, but here, he reflected, she suited the picture and he liked her.

Roberta was already in the best of spirits, talking about everything, asking about every one, her voice becoming higher and higher, almost as though she wished to be heard across the fields. It was the way, he had noticed, country people often talked. "The county fair opened today," Aunt Lily remarked.

"Oh," Roberta shrieked, "we can go to it tomorrow. Tomorrow will be the best day," she hastened to explain to Leonard. "You see, the first day they bring in everything and then the day after tomorrow they will begin to take the things away again—I mean the pigs and the sheep and the Leghorns and the Holsteins and all. You've never seen a county fair? Oh, Leonard, you'll love it!"

While he did not think his enthusiasm would be as great as hers, he did look forward to it as something genuinely novel and amusing. He left early, so she could have a good rest.



"I Named Him After
You—Bob"

But she and Aunt Lily talked on and on. They talked a little of Leonard and of wedding plans, but mostly they talked of the changes which had taken place in the past two years.

"Did Teddy Beamis decide whether to give up his agricultural course or not?" Roberta inquired. "You never wrote me about it."

Aunt Lily looked at her quickly. Teddy had always been devoted to Roberta. Still was devoted to her. Aunt Lily knew that—she had been the one to tell him of Roberta's engagement. How she wished—but no, Roberta was asking a casual question about him as he had about every one. Roberta had never answered Teddy's first letters. Teddy had always come to Aunt Lily for any news of Roberta.

"He is running a farm next to his father's. He did think a little of going to the city, but you know his friend Clifford Grant did that and has been trying to get away ever since. It showed Teddy a thing or two as he puts it."

Leonard came for her a little before one the next day. She was keyed high with excitement. It was all quite amusing to Leonard. The band starting off promptly on the stroke of one, for example.

"They have dinner between twelve and one," Roberta explained. It was strange how quickly she had slipped back into the old ways. "There are to be some horse races, I've been told," Leonard said. "How about going to the grandstand and having a look at them?"

"Oh, no!" she answered him in a horrified tone. "Once you are in the grandstand you're stuck there for the afternoon. You have to pay again if you go out and want to come back." It was curious how suddenly thrifty she had become.

And so, when they arrived at the fair grounds they walked around. Roberta was insatiable. They looked through the buildings. There were the jams and the jellies and the pies and

the prize pumpkins, and there were, too, the designed pieces made of flowers; scythes made out of golden-rods and asters, lawn mowers of pansies.

And thence to fortune their fortunes told by the same fortune teller who visited the fair every year—remembered by her far older than Roberta. She kept tabs on all their little love affairs and wonderfully revealing were the secrets she found imbedded in their palms. Now and again Roberta agreed to go over toward the race track, Leonard was annoyed though by the lack of professionalism about it. But that was evidently what Roberta liked.

"It's just the same as always," she exclaimed happily. "They never get off right. That old bell always rings after the first great spurt of excitement to let us know it was a false start."

She led Leonard through the home art building—where were many pictures of George Washington looking sickly, and other pictures ridiculously tragic—an empty bed, two small shoes before it and a woman bending over the scene, weeping. "A Mother's Tears," it was called. But the artist was not only a realist. The next picture by the same aspirant was a ruddy Thanksgiving scene, every one at the height of merriment and good cheer, save the lifeless turkey about to be plucked for the forthcoming feast.

There were hooked rugs bearing designs of calm, gentle-faced lions, and everywhere one could obtain much free literature on hens, for the hens and roosters and ducks were close by in an adjoining building.

"If you feed 'em as we tell you," shouted one enthusiast. "They will lay or bust."

Oh, how Roberta loved it all, even the smells and the toothless old men with their sunken jaws and the old pointed caps they wore. Now as the afternoon progressed and the sun became hotter the bandmen were sitting countless, their suspenders at marked contrast with the splendid blue and gold of their trousers.

And, more than anything else, Roberta loved meeting every one again. Every one calling her by her first name, too, not in the least awed by Leonard as she had been at first. Plying her with invitations which she tactfully refused, for already she could feel how Leonard was shrinking from it all. It had amused him at first. Now he was ready to go home. It was crude, ugly, shoddy to him, horrid bits of food were to be seen everywhere on discarded cardboard plates which had attracted flies in large numbers.

But Roberta had decided she would like to take a look at the cattle.

"We'll go and see the sheep and cows," she announced.

"But they smell so horribly."

"Not here," she blithely answered, and led off in the direction of a group of long, narrow buildings.

All afternoon she had been thinking about them. Aunt Lily had told her that Teddy was exhibiting pigs, and she had an idea Teddy would be around there. It was all right meeting every one else. But somehow she didn't want Teddy and Leonard to meet. They wouldn't like each other, and more than that, she felt she would understand why. Yet now something drew her in that direction.

Teddy was there, hatless, coatless, young and healthy and enormously attractive with the tan of his face and arms and the brown, sun-bleached look of his hair. His gray eyes lost their laughing merriment as he caught sight of her.

She went straight toward him and introduced Leonard. It was more awkward than she had fancied it would be. For a moment she wished she had not come.

"Let's see what you're showing, Teddy," she said.

"Oh, just some pigs—an old sow over there. Do you see her litter?" They looked over the low shed and down upon a huge black pig, five little ones



"Leonard!" She exclaimed.
"I've an idea!"

tumbling over each other to get at her ready nourishment.

"Don't they nurse fine?" he asked Roberta. And then as suddenly reddened before her. It had come out so naturally. Now he realized, particularly from the expression on Leonard's face, that he shouldn't have said that. And he remembered, too, that one visit he had paid to New York he had gone to a vaudeville show. The audience had all snickered wisely over what to him had been a most natural fact being related. Embarrassedly now he tried to make amends.

"You must see my boy," he continued. "Won't the first premium. See his ribbon? I named him after you—my name for you when we were kids—Bob. I didn't know you'd be seeing him, and I kind of thought it would bring me luck, and somehow it was the only

name to suit him. Isn't he a beauty?"

"Oh, I love him, Teddy." Roberta had quickly regained her poise. "Isn't he lovely, Leonard?"

They looked over at Bob, enormous and white, with a stretched little twisted tail as a pitiful kind of an ending to his majestic frame. He grunted and peered at them from his mildly interested pink eyes.

"You'll be coming over to see the folks while you're here, won't you, and bring Mr. Connover, too?" Teddy added. "I'd like real well to show you my farm." He looked at Roberta unflinchingly. "Somehow I think you might like it."

"I didn't think it of you," Leonard said when they had walked away.

Roberta looked at him, questioning. "You mean because I liked seeing Teddy again? We were always such friends," she sighed. "He always understood me—I never had to explain myself or even improve myself," she added with a touch of bitterness.

"Oh, so that is the way it is," Leonard's tone was sarcastic, hard. "But to think, Roberta, that after all the nice influences you have had that you should let that fellow think you were pleased that he named that odious animal after you. Why, it was an insult, a frightful insult, and you didn't realize it."

"That is just where I don't agree with you," she retorted. "I don't consider it was an insult at all. He prized that hog—it was the finest of the lot, and he couldn't think of a better name to give it than—"

"Yours!" Leonard finished with a sneer.

"Look here!" She turned on him. "We've got to understand each other. I don't believe we ever have. I've been trying to make myself believe that I was happy and contented when I know now I was miserable. That's what the city's splendid influences and your improving efforts have made me—miserable. Now I know why I was so tired. My heart ached for things that were simple and genuine and sincere. I was tired and longed for things that were real and for people who were real instead of artificialities. I tried to fool myself I liked it all. I tried to make myself believe that an attitude with a waiter was something fine to have—so as to let a few farmers who handed one dishes of food think that one had talked to waiters snubbingly all one's life."

"And you've always been ashamed of me—if you hadn't been why did you want to improve me? And you would be ashamed of my friends if they came to town."

"You've loved what you thought you could make of me—not me, myself!"

"Roberta!" Leonard exclaimed. "You are tired now. You must come home and rest."

"Rest!" she shrieked. "I don't want rest. I don't feel tired. Not a bit of it. I feel rested, oh, so rested. Everything is clear and fine and open now. We've been caught up in tangles up to this point. At least I know I have." "We mustn't quarrel like this," he told her. "We're going to be very happy, you and I." But even as he spoke he thought to himself how awkward it

Continued on Page 26

Brass Commandments

Charles Alden Seltzer

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

UPON his return from the East, where he has spent the last five years, Stephen "Flash" Lannan learns from his foreman, Tom Yates, that cattle rustlers have been depredating his herd. It is pretty well established that the desperadoes are led by a dandy named Campan whom lieutenants are Derake, Hunsack, and Tulare. He meets Gloria Stowe, who is running the Bozeman City Hotel, in the absence of her father, and instantly develops a liking for the beautiful girl and her fiery, independent nature.

Gloria thinks she is talking to a tenderfoot from the East as she describes "Flash" Lannan in glowing terms and admits he is her ideal. She learns through Ellen Bozworth, daughter of a wealthy ranch owner, who her guest really is and is furious because he has not made his identity known.

Just to show her defiance of Lannan and his principles, Gloria goes to a barbecue with Campan. "Flash" has a run-in with the bandit

chieftain and his men and is wounded. When he recovers he again dons his cowboy clothes, mounts his magnificent horse, Palestar, and rides to Bozeman City to post a warning to cattle rustlers to leave his stock alone.

Ellen Bozworth rides to a neighboring ranch owned by a man named Clearwater. She carries a suggestion from her father that the two rustlers combine in a warfare against the rustlers, but she overhears a conversation which indicates Clearwater is hand-in-glove with the cattle thieves. Their conversation is about a raid on the Bosque Grand. Before she can warn Stephen, Clearwater discovers her and makes her prisoner.

The bandits raid Lannan's herd, kill one of his men, and desperately wound another "Flash" and his cowboys pursue the rustlers until they lose their tracks in the desert. Stephen sees Ellen fleeing from Clearwater and captures the rancher, who makes a clean breast of his association with the outlaws. "Flash" promises to let him off if he will aid in capturing Campan and his followers. The story continues.

CHAPTER XIV

HE sun went down when Ellen Bozworth was still many miles from Bozeman City. But the big gray horse did not falter once during the wild ride, and she clung to him, knowing that his strength and speed alone could save her from the horror that rode behind her. She had heard the rifle shots; she had felt the wind from the bullets, had heard their angry whine as they sped close to her. Silver, too, seemed to have heard them, seemed to have understood their significance; for at each report he had increased his speed.

Ellen had heard no more reports. The last one had reached her ears just as she had reached the crest of a high ridge above the long slope that led out of a flat. But she felt that Clearwater was still behind her, still close, and that he did not intend to shoot again until he could be reasonably certain he would not miss.

Silver raced along the smooth top of a low, wide ridge that ran east and west, Ellen leaning close to his neck to escape the terrific wind of his passing. Her eardrums were throbbing painfully; she got her breath in gasps even with her head bowed over Silver's mane. Her long hair had come down and was screaming behind her; she had lost her hat, and her lungs were full of the flint-like dust that swirled around her when Silver thundered over an occasional stretch of fine sand.

Twice she had looked back. Each time the sun, sinking behind her, had blinded her, so that she could not determine how close Clearwater was. Then came the afterglow, with its shadows and its deep rich colors, which made all objects in the distance bluish. Her long hair was stealing over the land, spreading its mystery and menace.

Silver had sunk with sickening suddenness into a depression; as suddenly he mounted the opposite side and swerved wide around the base of a barren escarpment that angled off the ridge into an arroyo.

Ellen had long ago ceased trying to guide Silver; she was trusting to his instinct in the semi-gloom, and was merely hanging desperately to the saddle, trying to get her breath, when she felt him slacken speed, swerve dangerously close

to the edge of the ridge, and come to a quivering halt.

Another horse lunged against her, striking her left stirrup. She cringed when she raised her head, expecting to look into Clearwater's wild eyes. Instead, she saw Gloria Stowe, leaning far over from the back of a big brown horse. One of Gloria's gloved hands was gripping Silver's bridle-rein; the other was engaged in tucking in some stray wisps of hair at the back of her neck.

The smooth sureness of Gloria's manner, the atmosphere of quiet confidence that seemed to surround her, affected Ellen strangely. The calming effect of Gloria's sudden appearance brought on swift reaction. Ellen shuddered, bowed her head to Silver's mane, and sobbed.

"Scared you, did I?" laughed Gloria. "Well, you scared me for a minute. What got him to running that way?"

"He wasn't running—away. I was d-drawing him."

"Well, he sure seemed to be running. The reins were hanging on his neck. That's a mighty queer way to be driving a horse. What were you running away from?"

"From Clearwater." Ellen raised her head and cast a fearful glance back the way she had come.

"From Clearwater? Not Lemuel Clearwater? Shucks! Lem Clearwater wouldn't hurt you!"

"He tried to shoot me! He kept me prisoner in a room overnight—since yesterday. I—I escaped by prying a win-

dow open. I got the saddle and bridle on my horse and—"

"Well, of all the strange things!" interrupted Gloria. She peered closer at Ellen, saw how tense and drawn her face was, and how her lips quivered. Suddenly she was down from her horse and at Ellen's stirrup. She helped the almost hysterical girl to a flat rock and sat down beside her, hugging her tightly and patting her face reassuringly.

"It sounded mighty queer to hear you saying things like that about Clearwater," she said; "but if it happened it happened, and that's all there is to it. If Clearwater comes along here I'll send him about all his business mighty quick. Now tell me all about it, honey," she added.

Ellen's recital of her adventure was brief but complete, and when she finished she gave way entirely and sobbed on Gloria's shoulder, while Gloria mechanically patted her hair.

After a time, when Ellen began to recover her composure, Gloria took out her handkerchief, wiped the dust and tears from Ellen's face, combed the tangled mass of hair that had become undone during the wild ride, wove it into bulging coils and folds, fastened it with hair-pins that she drew from her own hair. Then she helped Ellen to her feet and said calmly:

"I reckoned Clearwater was square. Him acting the way he did shows that you can't trust anybody any more. This rustling business has got to be a mighty general thing. Likely Clearwater figured on killing you to keep your mouth shut about what you heard. If I were you I would keep quiet."

"Maybe after Clearwater finds you haven't talked he'll not bother you any more. Don't get the notion that if you tell your father you'll be safe. Campan and the others hev got it in for all the eastern owners, and you telling your dad would only make it hard for him. He'd want to punish Clearwater, and there'd be a fight in which somebody would get hurt."

"But you can think that over later. Right now you've got to get out of here. You couldn't hev got so very far ahead of Clearwater. You change horses with me. That brown suit will make you mighty near invisible, for my horse is almost the same color. You go to Benson's. It's right straight across that little

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stretch of plain you see down there. I'll ride in plain sight on this ridge, and if Clearwater sees the gray horse he'll think it's you riding him. And if he catches up to me I'll tell him a thing or two, darn him!"

Eagerly Ellen followed Gloria's instructions. Mounted on the brown horse she descended the slope of the ridge, waved a hand at Gloria, and rode toward the level stretch Gloria had pointed out.

Gloria mounted the gray horse and walked him slowly along the crest of the ridge until the distant shadows closed over Ellen. Then Gloria halted the gray and gazed intently westward into the dusk. Her lips stiffened, her eyes flashed, and she urged the gray horse on. Half a mile back on the ridge she had seen a horseman faintly outlined against the horizon.

She kept the gray horse going steadily, but slowly. Later, when she heard the beating of hoofs behind her, she let Silver out a little, for she knew that Clearwater must have seen her. The closer the horseman drew, the faster she drove Silver, so that when the other stuck his muzzle into view at Silver's withers both horses were running hard.

Not until the horseman came alongside did Gloria seem to notice him. Then she turned in the saddle, to carry out her threat to "tell him a thing or two."

She saw Lannon riding beside her, smiling oddly.

The shock of seeing Lannon when she expected to see Clearwater was so great that she almost dropped the reins. But she succeeded in steadying herself and for a few yards rode on, strangely agitated. She was pleased, angry, suspicious, disappointed. She did not know which emotion dominated. Then came a surge of furious jealousy, which seemed to burn like a flame in her heart. Had Ellen lied to her? Was it Lannon who had imprisoned Ellen, who had pursued her? Had Ellen also heard about that shooting?

She drew Silver down—to a walk, then to a halt. She remounted the wave of jealousy that had swept over her; she fought it as she sat motionless in the saddle, facing Lannon, who had also halted and was now riding back to her. She told herself that she did not care what had happened between Ellen and Lannon.

To her astonishment Lannon laughed softly as he brought Polestar close to Silver, so close that he could see her flaming face and flashing eyes.

"That was a clever trick, Gloria," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"Your changing horses with Ellen Bosworth, of course. For a little while it fooled me, because there isn't another horse like that gray in the valley."

"Stranger, what do you mean?" Despite her indignation, she meant to be loyal to Ellen.

"Gloria, I reckon you can trust me. I don't intend to talk about what has hap-

pened. I saw Clearwater riding after Ellen. I left him back on the trail. Where did Ellen go?"

So then it had been Clearwater, after all! Gloria felt a vast relief, a strange, wild joy.

"Stranger," she said, "Ellen rode to Benson's. Clearwater must have scared her half to death. She was pretty near hysterical when I met her. Hev you killed Clearwater?"

"Not quite. He was able to ride home."

Lannon leaned close to Gloria. "I reckon you know how things are in the valley, Gloria. I'm going to ask you to keep silent about what happened to Ellen. She talked to you, I reckon. But she wasn't in as much danger from Clearwater as she thinks she was."

"She told me what happened, stranger. It's nothing to me. I reckon I'm able to keep my mouth shut."



"Do You Want
Company Into
Town or Do
You Prefer to Ride Alone?"

"I know that. And I reckon that's all. Ellen will be safe at Benson's tonight. Clearwater won't bother her again. Do you want company into town or do you prefer to ride alone?"

"It doesn't make any difference to me, stranger."

For a mile Silver trotted beside Polestar. Lannon watched Gloria from the corners of his eyes, but the girl did not look at him. He was certain of that.

It seemed to Gloria that circumstances were forever conspiring to place her in positions in which she would appear at a disadvantage to Lannon. Was it that, or was she to blame that she did not rise above such situations? Would another girl, Ellen Bosworth, for example, have carried off the present situation to her

own advantage? Would she have been able to impress Lannon with her ladylike qualities despite the jealousy she would have felt had she seen Gloria Stowe?

Gloria thought Ellen would have impressed Lannon, for Ellen had that delicacy of habit and manner which would have aided her to impress him. Where Gloria Stowe had been unable to speak because of the fierce flame within her, Ellen would have been able to give voice to disarming speeches. Would Ellen have muttered that sullen speech, "I reckon I'm able to keep my mouth shut." No, Ellen would have known how to answer Lannon without betraying her feelings.

Gloria did not know how to do those things. She felt her incapacity to express what she felt or to conceal what she did not want others to know. Her graces were all inward; she knew of their existence but could not give them expression; they were unformed, undeveloped, surging, painful, demanding, clamoring for outward display. She was groping in the dark of inexperience for the perfection she craved. With heavy breast she rode alone, silent, fighting her emotions. She was glad that the dusk was deepening, that Lannon could not see her face distinctly, to divine her thoughts.

Also she was glad in a fierce, wild way, that she had ridden westward that afternoon, for the whim had brought her where she was, riding beside Lannon, homeward. She would be content if he did not speak another word to her.

But when they had gone another half-mile Lannon spoke:

"Gloria, why do you keep on calling me 'stranger'?"

"I reckon we won't talk about that."

He dropped back a little, so that he rode close enough to see her face. She kept it averted. Lannon felt a strange wistfulness as he gazed at her profile, observing her set lips, feeling the gulf of distrust and dislike that he himself had dug when he had slighted her in Ellen Bosworth's presence.

But did not the fact that she betrayed the hurt indicate that despite of what he had done she did not dislike him? He could not change what had been done, of course, but he had regretted his attitude that day. Her praise had sounded so sweet to his ears that he had forgotten that she had certain rights, rights that any gentleman of sane and active mind would not overlook. But he was not certain that he had been in his right mind that day, because it had been the first time in his life that any woman had woven a spell about him, and he had been so amazed at the queer intoxication of his senses that he had forgotten to be polite.

And during the days of his convalescence from the wound Campan had given him he had yielded more and more to the strange glamor that Gloria had thrown about him. In every mental picture he drew of her he could see her honest eyes revealing him, he could see back of the reproach the unexpressed and inarticulate wish that he would think her the lady she longed to be.

He wondered then, as he wondered now, why nature, even though ironic and cruel, could not have granted the girl the boon of an outward grace that

would have made men accord her the respect she craved. Also, he wondered what malicious devil had prompted him to treat her as other men she had met had treated her?

He rode closer, driven by an eagerness to make her understand him, by a yearning to touch her, by an enthralling impulse to take her into his arms and tell her that he had loved her from the instant he had seen her standing behind the counter in the hotel office.

He reached out, grasped her left hand, which was resting on the pommel of Silver's saddle. He felt the fingers quiver, then grow rigid.

"Glory," he said, "I can never stay strangers to each other, I've wanted you—"

Her right hand flashed out; the quilt she carried in it struck his cheek, searing into the flesh. He caught the scornful, contemptuous flash of her eyes, the bitter curving of her lips. Then Silver leaped forward and plunged, a thundering white flash, into the growing darkness of the trail ahead.

CHAPTER XV

AN EARLY moon was rising over the southern rim of the valley when Lannon entered Bozzam City. It threw a silvery radiance over the plains; it bathed the town's shanties, giving them a romantic quaintness of appearance, a comfortable smugness. The long street was almost as white as in the daylight; the flickering beams of light from kerosene lamps in the buildings seemed weak, impotent.

Lannon rode Polestar past the post office. He caught the glint of the moonlight on the brass cartridges he had placed above the bulletin-board; he observed with satisfaction that the notice he had posted was still there. Polestar was trotting sedately when he reached the front of the hotel, and he showed an inclination to halt at the hitching-rail in front of the building; but Lannon urged him on, sent him through a vacant space between the hotel and the building next to it on the east, and dismounted at the door of the big stable belonging to the hotel. After what had happened between him and Gloria he could not stop at the hotel over night, but he saw no valid reason why he should not leave Polestar in the stable while he made some purchases in Blanchard's store, which adjoined the post office. He meant to take advantage of his visit. Later he would ride over to Benson's and have a talk with Ellen Boworth.

Leaving the stable after putting Polestar in a stall, he stood in the doorway for an instant, feeling his cheek where the quilt had struck it and smiling at the darkened windows in the rear of the hotel. Presently he moved away in the shadows, walked between two buildings, and came out on the street in front of Blanchard's store. Blanchard, a fat man who breathed wheezily and wore a greasy vest of such prominence

over the abdomen that the cause of his difficult breathing was glaringly apparent, silently showed Lannon some shirts that Lannon stood in need of. Blanchard was a new-comer to Bozzam City.

Laying out the shirts, Blanchard returned to resume talking with two men who sat on the counter a few feet distant from where Lannon stood. Lannon had paid little attention to the two men except for a quick glance as he had passed them. They, like Blanchard, were strangers to him. A fourth man, who was small, slender, and wore faded overalls and a flannel shirt that was much too large for him, leaned on a cigar case near the front of the store, smoking meditatively. He had evidently been listening to Blanchard and the other men, and he was now trying to appear unconcerned and politely indifferent while he waited for them to resume the talk that had been interrupted by Lannon's entering. The little man had gleaming, squinting eyes, and twice as Lannon glanced toward the front of the store he caught the little man watch-

sat on the back of his head, giving him a rakish, piratical appearance.

"Throne, I reckon you're mighty particular," suggested Blanchard.

"Haw, haw, haw!" laughed the other. "Wa'al, call it that. A man's got a right to be particular, 'cause of he's got sense he won't get hooked up to no female critter more'n once in his life. An' a man's got a right to his own judgment. I'm jest tellin' you boys that ef I was a marryin' man I'd fight shy of that Glory Stowe!"

"Throne, you're prejudiced," said Blanchard. "I ain't never seen Glory Stowe do anything that would make a man think she wouldn't make a good wife. I reckon you're sort of sore at her because she shut the door in your face when you was devilin' her."

Blanchard's tone was slightly jocular. Throne could not take offense at it. But there was something more than mere jocularity in Blanchard's voice. He had injected an earnestness into it, an insidious hint that perhaps after all Throne was right, and that there possibly was ground upon which Throne could base his claim to the unfitness of Gloria to become his wife.

"Sho!" The ejaculation was half sneer, half derisive laughter. "Blanchard, she didn't shut no door in my face because I'd been devilin' her. Haw, haw, haw! I reckon not! Devake was in thar with her! Devake had been hangin' around thar for a good many days. An' I reckon you know Devake. Wa'al, when a woman shuts a door in one man's face an' stays inside with another man, you can jes' gamble thar!"

Lannon stood in front of Throne. He might have been about to renew acquaintance with Throne, so coldly quizzical was his smile. It was as though he doubted Throne would recognize him. But Throne saw something more in the smile, something that brought a queer pallor to his face.

"Throne, stand up!"

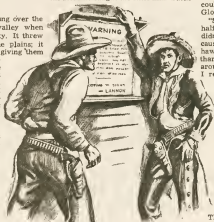
Throne's color rushed back. He hesitated, smiled with a strange mixture of doubt and defiance, and slid off the counter, facing Lannon.

Throne saw Lannon's right arm flash outward. He threw up an arm to ward off the blow. Lannon's fist flected past the arm, crashed against Throne's jaw with an inward, downward motion. The man fell sideways, alongside the counter. He was flung by his feet, where he stood, reeling drunkenly for an instant until he went down again from another savage blow that landed squarely on his lips. The second blow threw him against the counter. He rebounded, ran into another blow, and in falling struck his head against the counter, whence he dropped to the floor and lay on his back with closed eyes, his lips macerated, his face swollen and discolored.

Stunned, amazed, Blanchard and the other men at the counter had offered no interference. They stared at Lannon as he stepped back a little and looked at them, a sinister challenge in his eyes.

When he saw that Blanchard and the other did not intend to take any part in the affair, he nodded his head toward the rear.

(Continued on Page 24)



"You're Getting Your Chance, Campan, Let That Hand Down Slowly, Keeping It Awey From Your Gun!"

ing him intently, an odd smile on his lips. The little man was also a stranger to Lannon.

Lannon had selected two shirts. He was examining another when out of the talk at the counter came a voice that made him stiffen:

"Wa'al, I reckon ef I was lookin' for a woman to marry I wouldn't hev no truck with Glory Stowe!"

Glancing past his left shoulder, Lannon saw the speaker while the words were still issuing through his lips. He was a big man with a bold, raw face. He was not a cowboy, for he wore black trousers stuffed into stiff boots with low, flat heels, a calico shirt with a low, stiff collar, a black vest with a heavy gold chain caught with a massive gold bar in a buttonhole, and a brown derby hat with a flat crown. The hat

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Alma and Paul
Ellerbe



CICELY was having a brain-storm. After a marvelous swim in the lake, she had gone to sleep in her bathing suit amid the sweet fern at the edge of the tiny circle of land known as Dinner Plate Island, upon which her family spent their summers, and had awakened, full of the most heavenly feelings, to hear Mr. Whittington, the novelist, and Mr. Carteret, the poet, talking about her. It was what they said that had given her the brain-storm.

"What will happen to Cicely," Mr. Whittington had stated, as dryly and positively as a professor of psychology addressing his class—"What will happen to Cicely is this: She will go along for a year or two yet, indulging in these 'crushes' for other girls; modeling a little, acting a little, doing a little painting—none of it good; and then—not being in any sense an artist herself—and being almost as unawakened as a baby, and nearly as devoid of initiative or force of her own, as well as the victim of a rather serious mother-complex." (Mr. Whittington was fond of long sentences) "she will fall in love, or think she does, with one of these little artistic cossies her mother's always seeing genius in, and marry him, and try to find satisfaction in taking care of him, and think she is finding it, until she is—well, 30, perhaps. And then—when her body has come to its full beauty—when Pan, or biology, or whatever you will has waked her up—then—"

"Then——?" said Mr. Carteret.

"Then there'll probably be the devil to pay."

Yes, in the shadow of the old abandoned dory, snuggled down where the sweet fern was thickest, Cicely was having a brain-storm. Dry, stupid old donkey!

But what he had said of a possible improvement in her looks when she was 30, interested her. "When her body has come to its full beauty." So he granted her something now. She rolled over and had a look at herself in the water. Was she really unawakened, undeveloped, a child still at 20? Wistfully she looked and wondered. Was it true that she'd never be an artist of any sort, after all the passion and energy she had expended and meant to expend? It was true, she acknowledged, that mostly she let her mother make her decisions. Was it from lack of character, or just because life was jollier like that? She wondered. Maybe she really ought to begin to do more alone.

Anyway, she'd tell the cock-eyed world it was not true about the "little artistic cossies"—whatever that meant. And she'd go straight to her mother and ask her about the other things. Mother would know if any one did. With one bound Cicely leaped to her feet to go and look for her.

She was a tall girl, brown, straight and beautiful. When she shot up out of the sweet fern only a few feet from where they sat on the tea platform at the edge of the lake, bald-headed Mr. Whittington and stout little Mr. Carteret almost toppled over into the water.

Cicely stared at the two literati with a good-natured, if rather foolish grin, and tried quite hard to think of something to say. With much more of living behind them, the two men were for the moment equally wordless. They turned an uncomfortable red that pleased Cicely.

"What you don't know about girls!" she said, stepping past them as unselfconsciously as a fawn. "Particularly me!" and was gone into the lake in a long clean dive that was a better poem than any in Mr. Carteret's little book bound in silver and midnight blue.

But Whittington's phrases stuck in her mind. She even went (when she couldn't isolate her busy mother and the talk had to be deferred) and looked up "cossie" in the dictionary: "Pet-lamb. Old English, cot-sitter (i. e., animal brought up in the house)"; and chuckled. Some of Mother's little poetasters and painterettes were like that. Fat chance, though, she thought, that she'd ever go husband-picking in that brier patch! Or anywhere else, for the matter of that. Indeed Cicely Hollingsworth thought on the whole that she'd probably live on an island, alone. The grandest thing in the world, she thought just then, was to be alone.

And the next grandest thing, she thought on the following morning, when her family, their guests, and servants were preparing to return to that city, the next grandest thing was to visit Elizabeth. Whereupon she asked her mother if she might, driving down all by herself in the roadster; and, having that kind of a mother, was told to shoot along; and did so in a stage of satisfaction that mounted now and then close to ecstasy.

Two whole weeks, if she wanted to stay that long, two whole weeks with Elizabeth! And driving down alone, through a day like that!

"If things get any more beautiful," she said aloud, "and life gets any more fun, I simply can't bear it, that's all!"



With a Light Hand

*Under Her Elbow the Boy
Steadied Cicely Over a Slippery Place*

To drift along like this with the leaves, or to empty your heart to another human being of your own age and sex, free from any touch of that—that whatever-it-was that spoiled the men—that was the way to live! And that was the way she was going to live! she thought, sitting there at the wheel serene and steady, something high-poised and singing inside of her, pouring out the miles until she sat, presently, before the doorway of her friend.

"She's gone," said the butler. "All of them are gone. They went to the city." In that moment, her plan was born, though she lied smoothly enough: "I'm going to the city too," and turned her car into the road that would have taken her there.

But she turned out again in a mile or two and headed back toward the island like a wild thing going home.

When she backed the car into the garage on the mainland, it seemed to her that no human foot had ever trod those

wilds before. The lake, its islands and several miles of country round about were the property of a club, to which Cicely's family had belonged from a date considerably earlier than that of her birth. The club had, been closed now for a week.

Directly opposite the garage, perhaps a quarter of a mile out in the lake, was Dinner Plate Island—her own little island—that she had loved and played on before she had any words to her tongue. On the other side of the lake, and off a little to her right, was the club house, where all the boats were, some three miles away by water and seven by road.

Cicely wanted to swim. She didn't even have a bathing suit, but she wanted to swim. There was one old canoe that was always left in the woodhouse on the island, that she knew she could come back to. She cast long searching looks in all directions, and then stepped into the garage and took off her clothes. She put them in the compartment in the back of the roadster (there were plenty of others on the island) peered carefully through a crack in the door, saw never a living thing but a small brown rabbit and a sleek black crow, and stepped out into the sunlight, locking the door behind her and sticking the key into its accustomed hiding place. She waded out in the shallow water and climbed up on a big brown rock.

The wind had sunk into a warm golden calm. The pines on the island burned with a still bronze light of their own. The water lay as motionless as the sky and more intensely blue. The trail left by a distant loon shone in a long thin gash of silver. And Cicely looked out over it all, feeling herself a part of that endless chain of beauty that stretches from molasses to millennium, and gave a funny little sob from excess of happiness and leaped far out and swam to her island.

DRESSED, she lay on her back beneath the pine trees and stared into the blue until she seemed to drift away from her body and almost discovered something she had always wanted to know—she couldn't have told you what.

And then she cooked her supper on a fire of sticks near the westward dock, where she could see fire and stars together in the water, and when she had eaten it and washed the dishes, started toward the old canoe in the woodhouse, intending a long secret Indian-silent paddle around the lake, but fell headlong into an enormous yawn.

"I'm a dead bunny?" she said to the night, and looked herself into her castle and stumbled up the stairs to the little room at the top which had been hers since she had first had a room, got into bed swiftly and dropped 9,000 miles into the Gulf of sleep.

It was still dark when she half awoke, but the preparatives of day were turning her eastern window very faintly green and the morning star hung in the middle of it like a jewel. The delicate prelude of breathing of morning, too, was abroad in the air.

Down in the lake the frogs were going it; crack, crack, crack, high, medium, and low, steady and conversational; crack, crack, crack, over and over again.

The frogs sounded so much like men

that she would have been frightened if she hadn't been accustomed to the similarity. She had always noticed it. Really, she thought, there might have been two men talking down there on the dock below her window. Elizabeth: The tentacles of her mind let go one by one. Elizabeth would have been—would have been scared—stiff. The very last tentacle was turning loose when one of the frogs said:

"Sure it's safe! Ain't the club closed up and everybody gone?"

Had she imagined that? She couldn't tell, but it jerked her broad awake. Her whole being set in a tide toward the window, listening.

"Go-to-hell! Go-to-hell! Go-to-hell!" That was the old boy down by the tea platform. He always said that. She chuckled and sank back toward oblivion.

And then, right below her window, in a thoroughly unfroglike voice, a man said clearly: "Well, just the same, I'd rather we didn't have to go bustin' into people's houses!"

"Aw, forget it!" said another voice. "The boss'll foot the bill."

A keel grated on the dock's edge. Footsteps clattered on the flagstones of the walk. Cicely's little Dinner Plate Island, where nothing ever happened, grew sinister.

SHED stepped swiftly out of bed and turned the key in the lock of her door. Then she tip-toed to the window



"What You Don't Know About Girls!" She Said, Stepping Past Them

and looked down. She could make out dimly the bow of a canoe pulled up on the dock.

The house shook, there was the riving of wood, and she knew they had broken the door. She was more afraid than she had ever been in all her 20 years. She stood still in the cold dark and longed so intensely for her father's house in town that she could almost see it. Her heart almost pounded down all other sounds.

She crept across the floor, in quaking dread of squeaky boards, and got into her clothes with a cautiousness she had never bestowed upon the process before, pulling on a little courage with each garment. Then she sat on the edge of the bed and tried to think.

All she could think was "bootleggers." It was all any one ever talked about, so it was no wonder. She was trying to figure out why bootleggers would want to come away off here, when she heard the voices again outside.

"I tell you there ain't a chance!" the other man grumbled. "Nobody in that hick town ever saw a good car, let alone fixed one!"

"Well, we gotta do somethin', haven't we?" The speaker shoved the canoe into the water, seated himself in the stern and, as the other man got in, put out the lantern with a snap. "Maybe the boss'll give us another ten apiece for all this extra trouble."

They pushed off in the direction of the club house, and the darkness swallowed them.

The "hick town" would be Keansborough Village, of course, three miles beyond the club house. She'd have time, if they didn't change their minds, not only to get away, but probably also to send some officer of the law to greet them here upon their return. For she was sure they intended to return. They must be leaving something downstairs which they feared to keep in the car while it was being repaired.

Fingering her way to an electric flash on a shelf, she stuck it into the pocket of her sweater to use if she had to, found the door, twisted the key slowly and carefully, and stepped out. She made a first class job of easing herself down the stairs.

When the newest post beneath her fingers told her she had reached the bottom, she stood in the strange black void the living-room had become, with little quakes of fear running up her back. She set forth with elaborate care and steadily mounting fear, one hand spread before her like an antenna, the other armed with the electric flash, found the reading table in its proper place and bore to the right toward the broken-in door.

And then came so close to screaming that she wasn't sure she hadn't. Certainly she had screamed inside. For her outstretched hand had touched the coarse shaggy hide of a large animal.

She knew almost but not quite immediately that it was a coat or a rug or something like that, but in the blind

agony of that second of uncertainty she felt that anything was better than the concentrated blackness and found herself flashing her light as a man might draw forth a sword.

Dramatically white and bright, the little keen ray raked the room, disclosing neither corpse nor cask, but, besides familiar things, only a bearskin laprobe over the back of a chair, and the broken door.

Until, indeed, she swung it far to the left. And then a man's face sprang at her white and staring, out of the dark, motionless and amazed. The face of a very young man, who was bound with ropes into a chair, the legs of which had been tied to the base of the built-in settle beside the fireplace.

"Wh-what are you doing here?" she faltered at last.

HE BLINKED and screwed up his eyes, trying to see beyond the light. "I seem to be kidnaped—as nearly as I can make out."

"Who-who?"—she couldn't keep her teeth from chattering—"who did it?"

"A couple of dumb-bells hired by my brother."

"Your brother?" Her brothers made the world to be grassy road beneath her feet. "What on earth did you do to him that made him want to? That is," she added timidly, "if you don't mind telling me?"

"Not a bit of it. I haven't done anything to him. It was what I was going to do that he objected to. And, by golly, I'll do it yet if you'll cut these ropes, so that I can get back to New York by 5:10 this afternoon."

"Why, I—I'd like! Wh-what is it you want to do at 5:10 in New York? Is there any harm in it?"

"Well, hardly! I want to take a boat that's sailing then for Italy, that's all. I've got my passage booked and paid for, and my trunk is all packed and everything."

"And your brother doesn't want you to go to Italy on that boat, is that the reason for having you kidnaped?"

"No. There—there's a girl going, you see. And he thinks that if I go too, one of these days I'll marry her. There's no reason on God's green earth why I shouldn't, except that he doesn't want me to! He thinks because he's a success in business he can straighten out people's lives. He couldn't stop me any other way, so he had me kidnaped! Sweet idea, isn't it?"

"Geel!" said Cicely. "It doesn't sound real."

"No, does it? In a way it isn't. Cuthbert read a lot of dime novels in his youth. Nobody born nowadays would think of such a thing. He's 20 years older than I am."

She pulled an ornamental hunting knife out of its sheath on the wall. "I'd just adore helping somebody marry the girl they love! You do love her, don't you?"

"I love her enough to go through hell for her!"

The words gave Cicely one of the most authentic thrills of her life.

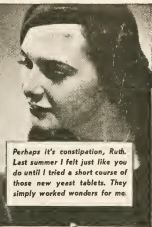
"Then hop to it!" she said joyously, and, laying the little flashlight on its side on the table so that it shone upon her work, she began sawing away with

Continued on Page 21

I'm always so tired and nervous, Helen, and I never have enough ambition to do anything or go anywhere.



Perhaps it's constipation, Ruth. Last summer I felt just like you do until I tried a short course of those new yeast tablets. They simply worked wonders for me.



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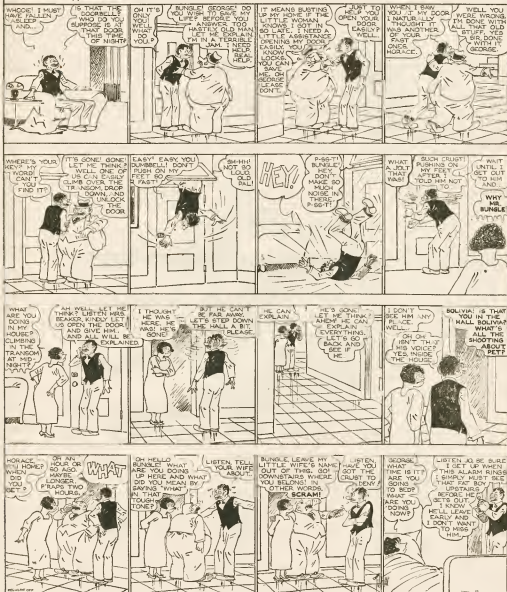
BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



THE BUNGLE FAMILY

By H. J. Tuthill



A Summer Madness

Turns Out to Be the Sanest Sort of a Thing

by
Phyllis
Moore
Gallagher

ALINE pushed Jerry Chatterton from her.
"Please! . . . Jerry! I don't love you! I don't! Why! I . . . I've about decided to marry Curtis Worthington . . . in June!"

As she said it, she wished again for the thousandth time that she could make up her mind to marry Curtis. He was tall and lean, in his middle-twenties, and conspicuously good-looking . . . a profile sort of person with inscrutable eyes and a not too damaging wave in yellow hair. It seemed there had never been a time when Curtis had not loved her, had not begged her to marry him.

Jerry stood looking down into the soft brown eyes that stared back coolly for all their dark warmth.

"I don't believe you, Aline. 'You're not the type to marry for money! And it couldn't be for love! You see, you love me!'"

He swept her into his arms then, caressing the russet curls, pressing his warm mouth to her eyes, her temples, her soft lips. "I know you still love me, Aline. You had me fooled quite a long while . . . all autumn . . . all winter! I thought you meant it when you said that you never wanted to see me again! I avoided you. It hurt me too much to face your icy stare! But yesterday, when you were forced to sit opposite me in chapel, your eyes so dark and hurt and starved . . . I knew you still cared. Of course I wasn't sure . . . not really sure . . . until now!"

Once more she pushed him from her. "I don't love you, Jerry! I don't! That was . . . oh! it was only a . . . summer . . . madness!" she almost sobbed.

A summer madness! She had tried to think of those glorious days at Virginia Beach as a summer madness . . . a madness that had gasped its last with the final warm breeze of August . . . a madness that would be easy enough to bury and forget for all time! But always there was Jerry's voice ringing in her ears, a voice with all romance concentrated in its warm fire . . . "It was inevitable that we should care, Aline. I believe in fate and things like that! I wish I had money enough to ask you to marry me now . . . right this minute! I'm that afraid of losing you! But it won't be a long wait, beloved, even though it will seem centuries to me in my impatience. By next June, after I have been assistant professor of economics all year, I will have paid off my scholarship debt and saved enough to be able to ask you to be Mrs. Gerald Chatterton! Of course, President Oscar Band will probably fire me for robbing him of his A-1 secretary!"

But autumn had come and with it the conviction that the summer had been a fabulous fairy-tale of a romance . . . only. For back at the university, Jerry had become a rather different person, she fancied . . . a Jerry who was considerably gossiped about for his fickleness, his "line," his somewhat reprehensible affairs . . . a Jerry who was constantly shadowed by the slim, dark instructor of Spanish, Georgia Vasquez.

"Vasquez and Chatterton are just like that!" the students would giggle, holding two fingers tightly together. "More like this, you mean?" one would invariably add, suggestively, curving one finger around the other.

Aline thought of those two perpendic-



"You're Not Too Old to Scram—
So Scram!"

ular fingers now, the significance of the gesture, the possibility that the students might one day say of her, and rightly, "Did he give her the run-around?" She steeled herself then against his attraction, the allure of the words which came from the lips, the heart not at all . . . against a repetition of heart-break.

"A . . . summer . . . madness?" Jerry repeated, questioning, his dark head bowed to hers, his black eyes burning for attention. "Aline, why go on being stubborn? You love me! Now admit it! You just kissed me with all your heart,

with all your soul. Perhaps you think a man can't tell when his kiss is returned!"

Suddenly, quite without realizing it, Aline whispered, "Oh! Jerry! I do love you! I do! I do!" The glow and rapture of the perfect moment possessed her. She wrenched her arms about his broad shoulders, swaying to his embrace like a slender flower to the warmth of the sun.

"Then you'll marry me June 1, Aline?" he pleaded, his voice husky. "I wonder can I wait three whole weeks?"

A few moments later Aline said, "Oh! Jerry! . . . Whew!" And she surveyed her surroundings which after all was not heaven, even as much as it had seemed so, but was only an office with a very pale golden light seeping in through aged glass windows . . . President Band's office where students and professors were forbidden to loiter!

"I get you, precious!" Jerry laughed and set her off at arm's length. "It is only an office and you can be so god-darned business-like! And speaking of business!" He drew from his pocket a long white important looking envelope. "When President Band returns to the city in the morning will you give him this with the assistant professor of economics' compliments. No! It isn't announcing that I'm stealing his beautiful brown-eyed secretary! You see . . . I can read your mind! Better be careful! This document, my good woman, is a report on the assignment to investigate one of the trustees! Some of the students seemed to think the old gentleman has buns in the belfry and I discovered that he has not only buns in the belfry but baseballs, tennis rackets, brassies . . . anything you might wish! In fact, he's one sporty old dog! If I hadn't sealed the report, I might suggest that you put on dark glasses and read it. But unfortunately it's 'official' and even gorgeous secretaries can't stick their pretty tipped noses into all 'official' business. Remember that after we are married, woman!"

"Right, Milord!" she said in mock gravity, dimpling adorably.

"And I shall honor you with my presence at 9 tonight!"

Then he was gone.

A LINE's body glowed with a delightful fire in the realization of the wonderful thing that had just happened! Jerry loved her! He really loved her! And after all the terrible things she had thought of him . . . faithless . . . philanderer! . . . fickle! To find out that he was as strong and steady and faithful as . . . as . . . oh! . . . as the Rock of Gibraltar . . . as Curtis Worthington!

Continued on Page 19

An Engineer Finds a Wealthy Girl SUCH A HELPLESS KID

Lloyd Eric Reeve

DRUSILLA'S small apartment on the eighteenth floor was modernly designed and furnished and lighted, like an exquisite jewel case. Drusilla sat in a steel chair, facing a miniature fire, in a miniature fireplace, and beside her, in another steel chair, sat Tommy Dalton.

Tommy had a small scar on his left cheek, and a savage's knife had made that. Tommy was a 300-dollar-a-month engineer back from a tick-infested jungle on a one-month leave, and three of his pay checks would not have paid for the slip of precious fabric which so smartly gowned Drusilla Lancing's ivory and blond loveliness. But they had both been born in the same small town and Drusilla had stuck her tongue out at Tommy and he had pulled her yellow pig-tails before either was six years old.

Drusilla curled her slim legs beneath her, and Tommy said, "You look like a sleepy kitten."

"And you," said Drusilla, "look like the hero in a tropic play. You honestly do."

"My month's already gone," Tommy grumbled, "and it seems I landed only yesterday."

"Drusilla been fun, Tommy?"

"Uh-huh. Too much maybe. I mean for me. Tomorrow I sail, and in six weeks I'm back on the job. Letting my beard grow and trying to make big bridges out of little nuts and bolts."

"But, Tommy! You love building bridges."

"Sure. Only—"

"Only what?"

"Only nothing," he grunted, and stared at the dancing fire. Then he said, "It's lonely down there."

"But so's a city," Drusilla's smile was moody. "So many people rushing in circles! What are they all looking for? The city's jungle, too, and lonelier than yours, Tommy."

He said: "Huh. Maybe places aren't lonely. Maybe it's just people."

Drusilla left her chair, a faint scent stirring as she moved. She walked to the window. "Listen," she said. "Can't you hear it?"

"Hear? Hear what?" Tommy's glance was puzzled.

"The city," the girl said. "Even 18 stories up. Even in the middle of the night you can hear its faraway roar."

Tommy grinned. "You're getting the jitters, kid."

She shook her blond head, but her lips were oddly compressed. She picked up a book, opened it, snapped it shut. She walked suddenly to the fire. She leaned against the mantle and hid her face in the curve of her arm and commenced to cry.

Tommy leaped to his feet. "Drusilla! What on earth—what's the matter?" He stepped quickly forward and slipped an arm around her waist. "Go ahead. Have it out." Then he crooked a finger under

her chin and turned her face to his and grinned boyishly. "I can make you a swell father confessor."

She laughed shortly. "I ought to be spanked. I didn't want you to know, Tommy. I didn't want to spoil your vacation."

"What didn't you want me to know?" His young voice was gruff. "Weren't we kids together?"

"It sounds utterly ridiculous." She shrugged. "But—well, I'm broke."

"Broke?" He was bewildered. "Why, I thought your father left a trust fund—I thought you had more than you could ever use—I thought—"

"You thought right," Drusilla nodded. "Only this year even trust funds have a habit of vanishing overnight. Mine did."

Tommy blinked. He said, "Huh." Then he gave a low whistle. "You mean—it's all gone."

Drusilla nodded. She tried a quick smile, but it was twisted, uncertain.

Tommy frowned. "But—what are you going to do?"

"I don't know. Find a job, I guess. How do people find jobs, Tommy?"

Tommy grunted and turned away and walked to the window. He stared into a fantastic world of luminous towers, of flashing electric signs, and saw a gigantic searchlight draw its naked finger across an ebony dome of sky. Far below he heard the sunken clang and clash of traffic, and he thought of it suddenly as the grinding of some monstrous and designing machine.

He turned from the window and crossed back to the girl. Her bare shoulders looked as fragile as thin and lustrous shell, but when his hands closed gently over them they were warm and firm.

"Listen," he said, "a construction camp isn't much fun. Not for a girl like you. The jungle's a green grove of loneliness. It's mostly ticks and natives and a sun that'd blister you. But a city isn't so much either. Not when you haven't any money, and are just looking for a job. I mean—between the two—could you take the construction camp—and me?"

She smiled crookedly; then her eyes lifted, meeting his. "Out of pity, Tommy? Are you just being the hero in the play?"

He shook her shoulders quickly, his voice faintly metallic. "Get this through your head. I've been crazy for you ever since I can remember."



He Crooked a Finger Under Her Chin and Turned Her Face to His

"Yes?" She laughed briefly. "Well, Tommy, I must say you seem to have concealed it pretty well."

"Sure I have. And why? Because I'm a construction man and a drifter. Oh, there'd be things you'd like—mountains and moonlight and tropic stars—things you'd love. But that's only half of it. Do you think I could ask a girl like you to take the other half? To step out of this—this handbox, into a sheet-iron shack, living with a bunch of natives and taking your baths in an empty gasoline drum? But now—it's different now. I mean—Drusilla, honey—will you sail with me tomorrow?"

"If I do," Drusilla said, "you'll always think I married you just to be taken care of."

"I don't care why, Drusilla—I've laid awake nights thinking about you." His quick grin was strained, a little crooked. "Maybe—you could learn to love me."

Drusilla nodded slowly. "Yes. But all that seems important now is—is just to escape the screaming loneliness of 5,000, 6,000 people! For one who really cares. Yes—I even think I could learn to love you, Tommy."

She looked up suddenly. Her white finger fleetingly touched the small scar on his cheek. Then she sighed, and slipped into his arms, shivering a little.

quaint square bell. She heard the rapture in his voice but she did not see the expression of wonderment, actual disbelief, that lighted his delicate features.

Aline crossed the luxurious length of the library to the hand-carved maple desk where Col. Keith stood waiting, smiling broadly, his wrinkled hand outstretched in cordial welcome. She noted the lined face, the senescent curve of his shoulders, the pale eyes and the bald head with its slick fringe of gray; all so incongruous above the youthfully attired body, slim in a light gray, double-breasted suit, flaming red tie and a large rose blooming vividly in his lapel.

An hour passed. Col. Keith dictated very fast, his announcement perfect, his voice so infected that it broke up the usual monotony of dictation. Suddenly he ceased speaking and closed his large, bony hand over Aline's cramped one.

"You're really beautiful, my dear. I thought so the first time I saw you taking notes at the executive committee luncheon."

"Thank you," Aline said, blushing furiously. She looked around the huge room, wondering just how one would escape if one had to. But how silly and melodramatic! Col. Keith was a trustee of the university... his character was beyond reproach.

But in the next moment it became quite evident that she wasn't so silly in thinking the situation melodramatic, for Col. Keith, his eyes very round and very bulged in their sagging, wrinkled sockets, was leaning forward to kiss her. "I want to kiss you," he said and in his pursed lips was every intention of turning his desire into a deed. "I want to kiss you a thousand times!"

Aline felt his hand on her trembling shoulder, felt his lips peck her ear affectionately. Well! Of all the stupid, silly old men! She pulled away from the arms and sought safety on the other side of the desk. But the agility of the old man was uncanny. As fast as she ran around the tables and dodged behind chairs, the colonel was right behind her. And then, in a moment of fainting panic, he caught her and crushed her to him, his lips busy pecking off the thousand kisses he had promised himself.

"Help! Help!" she screamed. And miraculously a shout came back. "Coming! Aline!"

Curtis! Darling Curtis! There he was!... steady!... I dependable! This had happened to prove to her how much she really cared for Curtis!... how much she needed him!... how much she relied upon him!

Col. Keith didn't seem to hear. He still had some 950 kisses to go.

It was just as Aline was about to give up that answering voice as absurd and fantastic, when she heard one of the small panes in the French door to the side veranda crash and saw Curtis' hand pecked through the broken opening to the key inside. Col. Keith heard it, too, for he stood up very straight and tried to control his asthmatic breathing. But to what was even more absurd and fantastic still, Curtis' hand was on Jerry Chatterton's body and Jerry, not Curtis, was stalking across the room, his eyes blazing, his face crimson with fury.

He spoke to the colonel first. "Well! So the letters from the board of trustees

didn't do any good! You're too old to hit! You'd fall into 50 dozen pieces if I did sock you! But you're not too old to scam... so scam!" And the colonel who had never heard the word "scam" sensed the meaning and... scam!

Then to Aline, standing tall and slim above her, a great dark giant of a young man: "So you broke a date on me this evening! Naturally you couldn't give me a few moments of your time when you can throw a big necking party with a hot-shot like Col. Keith! Looking for the bats in his belfry, darling? Or since I wouldn't let you read that report on him, maybe you thought you'd just breeze out here and find out first-hand why he's being thrown off the board of trustees of the university! Well, I guess you've learned the reason, all right, all right!"

Aline looked at Jerry in amazement. Her velvet brown eyes were lovely when they were amazed.

"And when your mother told me you were coming here! Well, did you ever see a small car doing 80? No! Just slip into your jacket, my sweet, and we'll breeze right along up the road to Rockville at 80 and get married... tonight! After this performance, I've decided you won't be safe without a keeper... and I'm after the job."

Jerry set her back from his arms and pinned his fraternity pin to her dress, above her breast.

"But Jerry! You and Georgia!... why! you two are married! This is her pin. How could you come to me...?"

"Georgia and I married? Whew-w-w! I guess one of Col. Keith's bats has established a permanent residence in your head! You do need a keeper! Come on! Let's hurry!"

She unbudged her heart to him then, begging for an explanation of Georgia's visit, her lies, his reputation as a philanderer... all of the things that had come between them. He answered question for question, a frown on his brow, his eyes dark and serious... Georgia was insanely jealous, unscrupulous, stopping at nothing to gain her point; he wasn't a philanderer, really. Before he had met her, Aline, he had had an endless succession of girls because not one had been able to hold him; then after she had thrown him over saying she never wanted to see him again, he had gone back to the old life, quite naturally, but seeking then a substitute for her, which he had never found, and which he knew he would never find. He was, after all, a one-woman man!

She was in his arms now, close to his breast. His mouth was just above hers. "Oh, Jerry?" she whispered into his lips. "That summer madness!... why! it was the most sane thing that ever happened to me!"

BOB'S LUCK

Continued from Page 1

would be if any of his friends and any of Roberta's friends from the country should turn up at the same time—his friends would feel just as he now felt, and Roberta would not be so easy as he had once imagined she would be. She would insist upon having them right along; she would not realize as

he had hoped she would, that it was not nobility, but a sense of the fitness of things which would make him not want to be too friendly with plain, simple people of whom and among whom she had been born.

The balloon was filling up. And Roberta would not leave. Leonard stood beside her, feeling enraged, warm, and uncomfortable. He thought of the city, of its dignity, its orderliness, and of the Roberta he had known there, pretty, ambitious, trusting in his superior knowledge of what was what, looking to him for guidance. Here she was self-assured, satisfied, and infinitely more vital and robust both mentally and physically.

Now the balloon man had withdrawn inside his car. There was a long wait, and then in a twinkling it had gone up, and the balloon man, in handsome tights, was smiling and waving down at the people straining their necks to see him.

Down came the first parachute, then the second. He was using a third. This was a real fight. And he was going to come straight down—right on the fair grounds. Of course—there was no wind! With a rush every one made for the other side of the fence where it was evident he would land. Roberta had rushed with the rest of them; she hadn't noticed what Leonard had done. And she had gone stumbling along over the ruts and the uneven ground in her mad, excited, happy hurrying.

The balloon man had landed. The day was over, and it had been successful. Hundreds of satisfied people now made their way toward their cars or the jitneys, or wheeled the baby carriages and go-carts and walked toward home.

Where was Leonard? She looked about for him. Why hadn't he kept up with her? And then she saw Teddy coming toward her.

"Wasn't it a beautiful drop?" he asked.

"Did you see Leonard—Mr. Conover?"

"No, what happened; and by the way, Bob, you rushed off without telling me when I could tell the folks you'd be over to see them and have supper. They'll be real anxious to see you even if you are—even if you are—"

"Teddy"

"Yes?"

"I'm awfully proud you named the hog 'Bob.' I guess it has brought me good luck, too. Leonard thought it was dreadful, you know. But I know just how much of a compliment it was. And Teddy?"

"Yes, Bob."

"I know it would be an awfully poor night to go over to see your folks. I know they won't have much supper on account of its being fair night. But do you suppose I could come over anyway—just to see them all—by myself, I mean?" There was almost a plea in her voice.

He put his arm through hers.

"It's a good old thing—Bob—the country," he said, "for those of us who understand!"

LEONARD had waited for her from where she had run away to see the parachute drop. Much later he had

shows that it really means business. The canoe and the day came on together, the former growing bigger and blacker, to Cicely's inflamed senses, like an oncoming train in a movie. She took such breath as her panting lungs could hold, flung herself over on her stomach, buried her face in the water and threshed out furiously in the Australian crawl. The water boiled about her and her head bade fair to burst; and still the canoe was gaining and the boy stayed on ahead.

HE REACHED the shallows before her and was on his feet when she got there. With a light hand beneath her elbow he steadied her over a slippery place. Looking back, she saw two men plainly digging into their stroke with furious space-eating concentration.

She thought the jig was up, but she dashed through the Queen Anne's lace and golden-rod to the garage and whipped the key out of its crack and swung wide the door. The canoe was passing the rock that marked the beginning of shallow water.

Dripping water over everything, she leaped into her seat and stepped on the starter-post. Just as her companion dropped soggily into place beside her. With a crunch and a roar, she spun the car out backwards and jammed home the brakes, preparatory to the forward curving shoot she'd have to make to turn around—for there was no room behind; the forest road opened almost from the car's rear wheels.

But the headlights, as she threw them on, snapped the men up out of the dusk, like a couple of deer in a flashing photograph, startled and white, and so close that she could almost feel their hands pulling her out of the car.

FOR the flick of a fantastic long-remembered second, she saw them there, and the lake lit to brilliance behind them, and the white boles of the birch trees agleam on the island; and then some sort of driver's reflex-action—she certainly had no mental processes that she was conscious of—made the necessary motions, and the car backed into the forest road from the men's very grasp.

The road was rutty and full of roots, with a margin of about two feet on either side. But she knew it as she knew the paper on her bedroom wall. She could drive it backward or forward, night or day. With a derisive long-drawn note of the horn, she fled along it, spare-tire-first, head turned over her shoulder, steady hand on the wheel.

When the wood road had been left well behind, and the roadster with its wet and shivering cargo was howling smoothly along the state highway, with a new day flushing out over the world, "Where will you drop me?" said the boy.

And Cicely replied: "At the boat, if you like, in New York. I live there. I was going to drive down anyhow. It's your only chance you know. Nothing but branch railroads through here—with bad connections. The train wouldn't get you in till midnight."

"How perfectly bully for me! Talk about the goddess from the machine! Can we make it, do you think, by 5:30?"

"Hm—just! If we have luck. But there won't be any margin. No," she re-

peated slowly, doing sums in her head, "there won't be any margin at all."

"Then," said he, "we're going to miss it. Because you've got to dry out, you know. And put on some more clothes and get warm. And eat breakfast slowly, and a lot of it, boat or no boat!"

SHE thought at the time that it began to happen there beside the fire—he built one on a flat rock in a little grove of oaks, and then made her a tent out of a laprobe, so that she could change her clothes in great warmth and privacy. But looking back over everything later on, she was more inclined toward the moment in the water when he forged alongside and casually bade her hurry.

At any rate, it certainly began to happen, and by the time they were breakfasting voraciously in an ancient and attractive roadside inn, she had no doubt of it.

And, considering herself a member of what she took for the Left Wing of what she liked to call the Younger Generation, Cicely acknowledged it. Greeted it indeed, with a sort of inward, "Whoops, dearie! So this is love!" Examined it with robust and wholesome curiosity. Stood it on its left ear and shook it. Bit it and rang it on the counter, and found it real.

And then sank back rather forlornly into her seat and sighed inwardly and thought: "It's a low dirty trick of Fate, sending him along after he's been kidnapped, bound, and gagged by another girl!"

He was just as nice as he could be; he was the nicest man she had ever met (she thought of him now as a man); but as plainly bound and gagged as he had ever been on the island.

Not that he didn't throw himself headlong into the day, and the relationship. He was as jolly and gay and unself-conscious as her brother Bill would have been, but in exactly the same way; and it wasn't at all what Cicely wanted. Something had stricken her achingly, so that his voice was a bitterly sweet pain to her, and the way his face looked against the blue sky made her heart do little tumbles, and his arm against her arm burnt its way through all the wrappings between.

All these taken together and candidly encouraged, as her grandmothers were reputed never to have encouraged them, told her plainly what the trouble was. And, true to the Left Wing, she wasn't ashamed. She was interested and agitated and wistful and annoyed. And deep-down in scared and sad. For there was, most obviously, no chance at all of getting him. Or even of trying. It wasn't the sporting thing to do. He was marked reserved as plainly as a restaurant table with a placard on it; and her job, since she really was the good sport he had called her, was to get him to New York in time for the boat, and turn him over to the other girl.

And so she held her head up, and smiled and laughed and chattered, while a great searching ache sapped her joy.

"I think," she said, "unless an airplane picks us up, or we sprout wings or something, I think we're going to miss the boat. That delay at lunch—and all the time you made me take getting dry this morning—"

SHE flashed past a corner where an old stone house cocked a disturbingly familiar eye from the midst of flaming maple trees. Why did she have a vague feeling that maybe she should have turned there? One never turned there. What was it? And then she remembered. But really the chance was such a slight one. It wasn't worth considering. Almost sure to be just a waste of time. Still, said the good sport in her, there was a chance.

"It's just possible," she said, as she took the corner. "That the new road is open. It's been promised for ever and ever. No one really expects it to be ready until spring, but—"

A great sign with a red arrow on it rose up and smote her. "SHORT CUT TO NEW YORK," it said. And, "We'll make it now," said Cicely in a small clear voice. "With at least an hour to spare. Maybe two."

It was two. Indeed, as they walked together down the length of Mrs. Chester Reddington's drawing-room, it was even yet but a quarter of four. They had stopped, too, at their respective homes (which proved to be a scant two blocks apart, and only five from this place) and effected swift changes into garments that enabled them to muster in acceptably with either of Mrs. Reddington's two sorts of guests. These were the smart, which included "Old Cuth," the brother of Donald Martindale (since that was his name), and those oddments and remainders lumped as "artistic," among whom were to be found, Don told her, the Messrs. Carteret and Whittington, for whose confrontation Cicely had agreed to come along.

"I would like to happen up to old Cuth," Don had said, after he had explained about the tea and had the wherefore of Cicely's interest in the two literally explained to him, "and see him get the dry grins. He's got it coming to him!"

And Cicely had thought that there were things coming to Mr. Carteret and Mr. Whittington that she would like to deliver—until she got here. But now, standing where Don had left her, watching his tall figure make its easy progress down the room, she realized that all she wanted in the world was to go with him the rest of her life, and to have him love her as she loved him.

It was all so plainly written in her face as she stood looking after him, that Mr. Carteret and Mr. Whittington could have read it there if they had noticed her; but they didn't. As for Cicely, again she had forgotten them. The tides of her feeling swept her, deep and strong, far and far away from them. She had dropped plumply and suddenly into womanhood. She wanted her man as she had never known how to want before, and in a moment now she was going to tell him goodbye forever. She stood still and unregarded in her corner and had her first taste of adult hell alone.

When Don came back and laid his hand on her arm, the people were blent, and blurred before her, and she went on out again, clinging to him in a misty welter of pain. His voice cut through it, intolerably buoyant and gay, and she thought, "If I don't buck up, I'll give away the whole show, and I mustn't! I mustn't ever!"

the hogan and looked down at Little Moon, sleeping heavily with a sweat upon her skin.

So the night came down, blue with its dark sky, silver with its stars, and Sonya spent some of it leaning against Darkness in the pole corral, meditating on life and death and that mysterious thing within the human soul which makes it dare the Infinite. She walked about a little, too, listening to a band of coyotes singing their unearthly song over in the Bad Lands, and finally, satisfied that all was well, she lay down on the second pile of skins and went to sleep with her hand on Little Moon's wrist.

Two Fingers sat all night in the hogan's door, and none might know what was in his mind of gratitude and hope and silent joy.

Sonya was up by dawn, and Little Moon was awake, weak unto death but peaceful, and the wind was blowing coolly outside to herald in another day. Sonya fed her and made a pot of the precious gruel and instructed the man in its giving, its protection from contamination.

"You'd better go to the trading post, Two Fingers," she told him, "and get some more oatmeal—a big package. Take the children with you. She will be all right. She needs rest now, no worry, and much gruel. Also, presently, mutton broth. I go today to my own place—to sleep—and I will come back. Her life is yours now. See that you keep it by doing as I tell you."

To Little Moon herself she said, "I go now—to rest—but I will come again. Drink the gruel as I have given it to you, a little at a time, and sleep much—sleep all you can. So will you walk in the sun again."

Then she was outside the hogan, pulling on her gloves, her saddlebags at her feet, waiting for Two Fingers to bring her horse.

She was dead weary, even though she had rested several hours, and her face showed the strain she had endured, but she was smiling, a little pleased smile that had in it something of cockiness, as if she approved happily of the part she had played in this lowly drama of sage and sand.

Two Fingers put the bags in place, and over the saddle his eyes were on her gravely.

"There was a Blue Woman of the South once," he said in Navajo, "whose son, being a son of the Sun God too, delivered the Navajos from under the earth. She was all goodness—the Turquoise Woman. She makes her hogan in your heart."

To save her life Sonya, who knew the legends of these people, could not help the tears that sprang to her eyes. It was because she was a little tired, maybe, a bit unstrung with the recent ordeal—but Two Fingers was telling her that she had delivered him and his. Before she could reply a sound struck on the stillness, the crack of a horse's hoof against stone, and she looked quickly down the wash.

There, almost upon her, was Rodney Blake on Serge's bay mare.

"Why, Rod?" she cried. "How in the world did you find me?"

"Serge told me the way. Are you ready?"

"Yes. Just going. Oh, I'm glad you came! It'll be a grand ride back with the sun coming up. This is Two Fingers, whose wife is sick."

The Indian looked up, but Rod Blake did not see him. It was as if she had not spoken the last few words, or as if they had not penetrated his consciousness.

"Yes," he said, "it will, though it has been cold."

"All right," said Sonya, reaching for Darkness' rein. "Let's go. I'm ready, and so is Darkness. He's been penned up too."

She did not finish, for another sound came out of the profound stillness of the sunrise—the shuffle and slide of a man's booted feet this time—and around the bulge of the hogan a tall figure in a blue shirt, worn chaps, and high-heeled boots appeared.

His wide Stetson hat was back on his fair head, and he carried a cigaret in the fingers of his left hand. Long, excitable blue eyes under bronze-colored brows flashed over them all. No one spoke for a moment, and a strange, half painful shock of recognition went over Sonya.

It was the man of Lone Mesa.

Taking in the unexpected group with lightning swiftness, his gaze came back to her, rested upon her as if against his own volition, and a slow red tide flowed up along his lean face. As Rod a mo-

ment before had not been conscious of Two Fingers, so now this man was not conscious of any one but the slim girl in riding clothes with her foot arrested in the stirrup.

He stood so long looking at her that Rodney Blake's face changed.

"Sonya," he said sharply, "shall we go?"

As if a spell were broken, the stranger looked up sharply.

The eyes of the two men met—and held.

In the silence that fell between them all that deep look endured, the visible evidence of a hard, quick hostility sprung to life on a word, an infection.

It was as if two blades struck and crossed, as if two armed forces clashed. There was instant hatred in it, instant opposition.

Then Sonya swung into her saddle and was away at a lope, Rod following close behind.

"Who was that man?" he asked thinly when he had caught up with her. "Do you know him?"

"I don't know, and I do not," said the girl crisply, "and I don't like your tone, Oh, Rod dear. I do wish you would understand me better."

"Forgive me, Sonya," said Blake, "but I hate all men who look at you—too long."

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

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BRASS COMMANDMENTS

Continued from Page 19

"I'll take the three shirts I have laid aside, Blanchard," he said. "Wrap them up."

He stood at a little distance from the counter while Blanchard obeyed his orders. Then he paid Blanchard, though he did not offer to take the package the latter had laid on the counter. He glanced at the little man who stood at the cigar-counter; saw him watching Blanchard and the other man with a vindictive, satisfied smile. When Throne regained consciousness and got slowly to his feet, there to hang upon the counter for support, Lannon again confronted him.

"Throne," he said, "you are one of those miserable sneaks that try to be important at the expense of an innocent woman. If I ever hear of you speaking Gloria Stowe's name again I'll kill you! Do you understand?"

Throne nodded. Lannon walked to the counter, picked up the package Blanchard had laid there, and stepped out of the door. No word was spoken in the store until Lannon's shadow had passed from the glass window in the front of the room.

Then Blanchard spoke in a strained, light voice:

"I reckon that guy must sure be a friend of Gloria Stowe!"

The little man at the cigar-counter laughed derisively.

"You boys have been bevin' a run-in with Flash Lannon," he said. "I always opined that when a man come to this here town he'd make the fur fly!"

He stood for an instant enjoying the awe in Blanchard's eyes and the aghast pallor that swept over the faces of the other men. Then he walked, grinning,

to the door, let himself out, and walked swiftly down the street, chuckling to himself.

Lannon returned to the stable behind the hotel. He stored the package in the slicker behind the canteen of the saddle on Polstar, looked again with a smile at the darkened windows in the rear of the hotel building, stepped to the door, and drew out his two black-handled guns. He inspected them, twirled the cylinders, restored the guns to their holsters, and tried them a few times to make sure they would not snag when he drew them. For he expected to use them shortly. When emerging from the front door of Blanchard's store after knocking Throne down, he had heard Campan's voice issuing from the door of the post office.

Lannon did not return to the post office the way he had come. There was a chance that some one might have seen him and carried the news to Campan. He moved westward, close to the buildings, stepping carefully over the heaps of refuse that littered the place.

Two or three times he halted to make sure there was no one watching him, and at last he passed to the far corner of the post office building, stole along it to the front, and stopped in a shadow, from which he could see the front of the post office, where he could catch the glint of the moonlight on the cartridges on the little hood of the bulletin-board.

Through the thin sides of the building he could hear the voices of men inside. Campan's voice was loudest. The outlaw had evidently been drinking, for normally he spoke softly. Now and then a laugh arose. But Campan's voice dominated all others, even in those moments when all seemed to speak at once.

"Bozzam don't need no interference from any eastern dude!" cursed Campan. "This guy Lannon comes here after livin' East for five years, an' tries to lay down laws! Sticks a warnin' up in front of this here buildin' an' plants some cartridges on top of it. Why in hell haven't some of you boys pulled it down?"

There was an instant of silence; then a low voice:

"I reckon mebbe we was a little bit backward about havin' Lannon think he was that 'one other,' Campan."

"Well, I'll say this for Lannon," conceded Campan: "he's mighty slick. Stickin' that 'one other' thing up there has got the whole country stampeded. It's got every man thinkin' the next man is goin' to squeal on him. It's got every man scared to death that Lannon has got his eye on him. There's waddies in this country that's shakin' in their boots, expectin' Lannon to throw a gun on them!"

"The trouble is that there's a heap of guys in this country that might be the 'one other,'" said a new voice. A gale of laughter followed his words.

The sound seemed to enrage Campan. "Carter," he bellowed, "I'm pullin' that notice down!"

Carter was the postmaster, a little man, inoffensive, quiet.

"Campan," came his voice, "that's your business. I didn't feel that I wanted to take any chances on rilin' Lannon."

"I'm pullin' that notice down right now!" shouted Campan. His step sounded on the floor. It ceased suddenly. A placating voice followed a short silence.

"Shucks, Campan. What do you care for that notice? If I was you I sure wouldn't go to courtin' trouble. Lannon's lightnin' with a gun. He's meaner'n pizen. Him stickin' that notice up there wasn't no bluff. If your place I'd do a heap of considerin'. That there talk he handed you at Benson's wasn't no bluff. I seen that. I'd be rememberin' them three cartridges Glory Stowe give him. Campan, if you don't step live he'll get even for what you done that night!"

"Bah!" Campan's ejaculation was vibrant with derision. His curses were bitter; his threats wild, reckless. Again a step sounded on the board floor inside, and then he was standing in the doorway, his voice smothering the dead silence of the night.

"No eastern dude can run this town, nor put up any notices!"

For an instant Campan stood, outlined in the feeble light in the room behind him. Then he was outside and swaggering toward the bulletin-board on the front of the building, a crowd of men swarming out of the door behind him.

In the silvery radiance the faces of the men in the group that had followed Campan out were clearly outlined. All were silent, tense, expectant. Campan had talked much, had boasted, had threatened. But at this minute he was exhibiting a hardihood and courage that none had dared to show since the warning had been posted.

Campan had heard of the posted warning before entering town. One among the men who watched him now had carried word to him. And, knowing Lannon's reputation, Campan had come, had

entered town in violation of the warning, had come armed.

Campan laughed loudly, raised his right hand to sweep the cartridges from the little hood above the bulletin-board. There the hand stopped, still raised, poised, the fingers spread. From a point in the street, penetrating the tense silence, came a voice, sharp, cold, full of strange menace:

"Campan!"

As though they were puppets moved by the power of a master hand, the men in the crowd faced the street. Confronting them, his legs a-sprawl, the upper part of his body leaning forward a little, was Lannon.

While the men and Campan had been giving their entire attention to the bulletin-board, Lannon had left his position at the side of the building. As he now stood, the crowd was in front of him, the front of the post office forming a background that outlined them clearly.

Concertedly, staring at Lannon, the men around Campan began to move away from him. As they moved they raised their hands, thus mutely advertising the peaceableness of their intentions. Strange it was how swiftly they opened a clear space around Campan.

Campan had not changed position. He still stood facing the bulletin-board, his right hand raised. There had been no mistaking the voice that had uttered his name. Campan knew Lannon stood behind him.

"Campan, I reckon you've read that notice or you wouldn't be wanting to tear it down. You're heeled; you know what I told you that night at Benson's. I'm going to deliver one of my commandments! Turn around!"

Slowly Campan turned, his right hand still raised. He moved jerkily, as though forcing his reluctant muscles to function; after turning, he stood with the right hand still raised, staring at the sinister figure in front of him.

"You're getting your chance, Campan. Let that hand down—slowly, keeping it away from your gun!"

Campan's hand slowly descended. It paused imperceptibly as it reached the butt of the weapon at his hip, and Lannon's arms moved upward a little, in significant preparation. But Campan's hand descended downward until his hand

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swung at his side below the butt of the gun.

There was a silence while one might have drawn a full breath. Then Lannon spoke shortly:

"Flash it!"

Campan's hand leaped upward; his gun seemed to spring to meet his eager fingers. Incredibly swift was the movement, amazingly sure Campan's grasp on the handle of the gun. Yet while the muzzle was still in the holster a lance-like streak of fire darted from Lannon's left hip and ended at Campan's right wrist, while a second lance flame, seeming simultaneous with the other, leaped from Lannon's right hip and appeared to touch Campan's head. Campan reeled, spun around, and fell in a heap against the wall of the building, almost under the bulletin-board. His gun had dropped from his hand; it now lay in the dust of the street, glittering brightly in the moonlight.

Campan was not unconscious. While Lannon and the crowd watched him, he twisted around, sat up, lifted his left hand to his left cheek, and held it there, groaning, cursing. His right hand hung limp at his side.

Lannon's two guns were still in his hands. He stood as when he had faced Campan, his legs slightly apart, his body bent forward a little from the hips.

"I'm looking for the 'one other' I mentioned in that notice," he said. "If he's in this crowd I'm inviting him to go for his gun!"

The mysterious personage Lannon had called upon did not appear; none of the raised hands moved downward. Lannon's smile was cold and mirthless.

"Well, modesty will keep that other guy's skin whole, I reckon. Meanwhile, some of you had better lead Campan to the doctor; he's creased rather deep, and I don't want him to bleed to death."

For an instant he stood. No man moved or spoke. Then he sheathed his guns and walked down the street toward the hotel, not even looking back toward the awed group in front of the post office.

A FEW minutes later Lannon was leading Polestar out of the stable behind the hotel. Between two buildings, after he had mounted, he saw some men leading Campan down the street, and he smiled as Campan's curses reached his ears. He rode Polestar eastward over the plains, following a faint trail that he knew well. Half an hour later he was dismounting at the gate of Benson's corral.

Benson was glad to see him.

"You old son of a gun!" he exclaimed as he stepped out on the veranda and scrutinized Lannon in the light that streamed out of the open door. "You've sure got this country stirred up with that notice you stuck up on the post office. There's a heap of guys goin' straight in this basin who used to think it was a joke to rustle cattle! Lannon, your law is the best law that's struck these parts in five years!"

"Benson, this basin will stand a lot of cleaning up."

"Sure; you talk straight there. An' the only law that will put the fear of Gawd in the hearts of them rustlers is the sort of law you stood on end on that bood above the bulletin-board! Lannon,

there's talk among the honest owners of 'organiza' a bunch of regulators to get behind you! You've sure took right ahoid!"

"I'll be glad to have help, Benson, but I'm leaving that decision to the honest men in the basin. Have you seen Ellen Bosworth?"

"She rode in about dusk, Lannon. Mother Benson put her to bed. She was trembly an' scared. She didn't have much to say, but me an' mother sort of suspected somethin' had happened to her. You don't reckon to know what it was?"

"I haven't talked to Ellen lately," evaded Lannon. "I was riding the west trail yesterday and saw her ahead of me. When I got to that flat ridge just outside of town I met Gloria Stowe. Gloria said Ellen had ridden over here."

"She's lost her hat, I reckon," said Benson. "She wasn't wearin' any."

"I found her hat, Benson; that's what brought me here. Picked it up on the trail. In my slicker. I reckon I'll stay here overnight and give it to her in the morning."

"Sure; we'll be mighty glad to have you, Lannon. You just wait a minute till I get on my boots, an' I'll help you put your horse away."

Lannon was aware of Benson's suspicious glances while they stood for an instant on the veranda talking; and later when they went into the house Benson's eyes seemed to be probing for information. Just before going to bed Benson smiled knowingly at his guest.

"Mighty interestin' gal, Lannon. Well, I don't reckon I blame you for wantin' to hang around an' give her the bat yourself."

CHAPTER XVI

SHORTLY after dawn the next morning Lannon was coming out of the stable after feeding and watering Polestar and Silver, when he saw Ellen Bosworth, hatless, standing near the little stream of water that spanned the corral. She saw him as he looked toward her, and came toward him, smiling.

"Benson told me you were here," she said. "He said you had found my hat, that you had seen me riding ahead of you, and that you met Gloria Stowe."

"Benson is accurate as well as prompt, Miss Bosworth. I did all of the things he said I did. I have your hat in my slicker. Except that it may be crumpled a little it seems to be in good shape."

"I suppose you — you talked with Gloria?" she asked with a sharp glance at him.

"As a matter of fact, I rode to town with her." He smiled at her, seeing her satisfaction.

"She told me about your adventure with Clearwater. If you don't mind telling me I should like to hear what happened."

She told him.

"I'm glad you haven't told anybody but Gloria Stowe," he said when she finished. "You see, Clearwater carried the joke too far. In fact, he overacted."

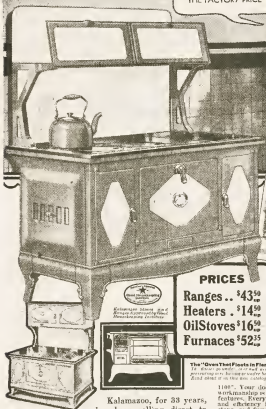
"What do you mean?" she demanded, her face flushing.

"Clearwater was not a rustler, Miss Bosworth. He is merely pretending to be with Campan. I met him on the trail yesterday after you got away from him,

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